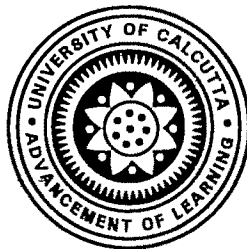


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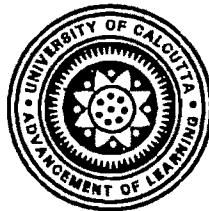
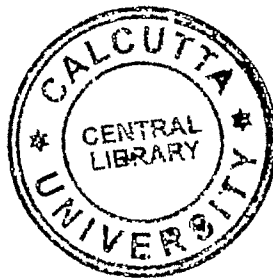


**University of Calcutta
2011**

C612-H-0527-2-G-12,642.4

*Journal of
The Department of*

SOCIOLOGY



University of Calcutta

2011

New Series-Vol-2

**PUBLISHED BY REGISTRAR, UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA,
87/1, COLLEGE STREET, KOLKATA-700 073
AND
PRINTED BY SRI PRADIP KUMAR GHOSH,
SUPERINTENDENT, CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY PRESS,
48, HAZRA ROAD, KOLKATA-700 019**

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G-146424

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Journals of the Department of Sociology

University of Calcutta

A Yearly Journal of Sociology

2011

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From Editor's Desk

We are happy to bring out the 2011 issue of the departmental journal. It has been an untiring endeavor and a determined effort to facilitate the path to create a platform for teachers, research scholars and students, all to interact and deliver in wide ranging academic text for others to discuss, differ and critique. With changing rules and regulations of our teaching and research process, it has become mandatory for all academicians to be able to express, debate, and deliberate upon their views. Therefore, the need for a regular academic journal of sociology in our own city, Kolkata is a necessity.

This issue has been published with the motto to promote free flow of ideas and creating, preserving and disseminating knowledge that constitutes the central theme of the vision and mission of University of Calcutta.

I sincerely hope our modest effort would set the ball rolling for the further publications in the years to come. I owe my sincere thanks to Prof. Bholanath Bandyopadhyay, my senior most colleague in the department, for his inexorably persistent and constructive assistance, and to Prof. Bula Bhadra for the motivation and continuous supportive practical assistance from the beginning.

Dr. Sudeshna Basu Mukherjee

DEPARTMENTAL PROFILE

The Department of Sociology at University of Calcutta has completed its thirty-four years in the year 2011. University of Calcutta had a full-fledged Department of Sociology in 1975 but the same began to function in 1976.

If we take a trip to memory lane then it can be said with certainty that from 1860s positivism had a living presence in the intellectual world of Bengal. As early as (1867), *Calcutta Review* published an article entitled "Sociology in India". Two thought-provoking articles entitled "Sociology of Auguste Comte (Comte Darsan) (1872) and Sociology (Samajbigyan)" in (1874) were published in *Bangadarshan*. Moreover, the academia at the University of Calcutta in the early 20th century was quite interested in Sociology as a viable academic discipline. We find Sociology was being taught as a subsidiary in M.A. Economics since 1909 and later on also as a special paper in Political Science. Incidentally, Sociology at the Liverpool University started in 1907 only. There is no doubt that interest in studying Sociology was upbeat in the overall encouraging ambiance of Bengal.

It was in 1975 that the University Grants Commission gave the green signal to start the Department of Sociology at the University of Calcutta. The Department started in 1975 with Bela Dutt Gupta, then Reader in the Department of Political Science, University of Calcutta as Head of Sociology department. She was the only full-time faculty of the new Department in the beginning. Part time teachers with Sociology background from sister institutions and sister disciplines like Political Science, Anthropology, Psychology and Management contributed in building the nascent Department of Sociology at Calcutta University. Subsequently, Prof. Bela Dutt Gupta became Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Chair Professor of Sociology, at Calcutta and a nationally acclaimed Sociologist. Professor Debkumar Banerjee started the Marxist Discourses in the department.

Soon the newly established Sociology department generated tremendous enthusiasm among the students and the teachers. Thursday afternoon was set aside for students' program. The Department received Japan Foundation Fellowship and a seminar was held in Dharbhanga Hall in 1978 jointly organized by Tokyo University and the University of Calcutta. The Department also started publishing its own journal from 1980. The faculty members participated in different national Seminars, Workshops and Conferences all over India.

An important feature of Sociology program at Calcutta is that from the very beginning the department offered compulsory courses in Research Methodology and Social Statistics along with Fieldwork and Term paper writing – the key courses that equip the students with basic skills for undertaking specialized sociological study and researches. The department has adopted the semester system of teaching and examination since 2010-2011 session alongside the departmental syllabus is restructured into modules with certain inputs to make it more contingent. Another special feature of the curriculum is our emphasis on Indian Sociological thinkers and thought. Sociology at Calcutta is among the few Departments in India, which encourages students to learn and dig deep unto the indigenous sociological thinking side by side European and American sociology. Additionally, the courses offered impress upon the students and the researchers to engage in critiques of Orientalism and to pursue original, independent and indigenous sociological thinking but without losing tracks of the changes and patterns in the arena of world sociology.

At present, the Department has five full time teachers and nine guest teachers. Prof. Swapan Kumar Bhattacharya, a retired Professor of our Department visited The Catholic University of America as a Research Professor in 2007. Prof. Swapan Kumar Pramanick, a full Professor of our Department was the Vice-Chancellor of Vidyasagar University, Purba Medinipur, West Bengal. Prof. Bholanath Bandyopadhyay, Professor of our Department is the General Secretary of the Sociological Association of West Bengal and is also the member of the central School Service Commission of West Bengal and a member of the Executive of the Council of Political studies. Prof. Bula Bhadra, Professor was a Managing Committee Member (from 2001 -2006) of Indian Sociological Society, New Delhi, the highest professional body of sociologists and Convenor of the Research Committee-21, on Social Problems and Marginalized Groups from (1998 -2005, 2010-) and has been to the International Sociological Associations at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden 2010 and University of Sheffield, U.K.

Most faculty members of the Department of Sociology at Calcutta contribute to different non-governmental organizations and to both print and electronic media as experts. The Department has launched a refereed journal from 2007 and the first volume had articles written by internationally famous sociologists. This second volume contains articles by international and national luminaries and our Ph.D scholars.

The Department has already produced a handsome number of Ph.D students who are employed in different Colleges and Institutes of repute. Currently about a fifteen students are registered in the Ph.D. program and some of them are in the pipeline, i.e. just waiting to

complete. At the moment we are running M.Phil course and three batches of students have been awarded the degree, we have successfully completed the first batch of Ph.D course work in academic session 2010 - 2011 in accordance with the Ph.D. new regulations 2009.

Activities in the department 2005-2009

The Department organized two Refresher Courses in different areas of the discipline. We have had Dr. Blanka Knotkova-Capkova, of Charles University Prague, Czech Republic to deliver a lecture on "***Methodology of Studying Gender***" in 2006 February; we have had the opportunity to have Dr. Bradley R. Hartel of Virginia Tech University, USA deliver a talk on "***The Calendars of India: A Sociologist's Perspective***" in July 2006; and Dr. John Brenner, Professor of Sociology & Global Education Coordinator, Southwest Virginia College, USA deliver a talk on "***On-Line teaching: A Sociologists Perspective***" in February 2007. We have organized two UPE lectures by Prof. T.N. Madan renowned Sociologist, on "***Secularism and Religion in Contemporary India***". The first lecture was on '***Religion in our times a Sociological Perspective***' and the second on '***Dumont's Sankalpa: What Dumont's project was all about***' in March 2008. Our department felicitated Prof. Bela Dutt Gupta our first professor and renowned sociologist in November 2007 and she was awarded the Lifetime Achievement by Indian Sociological Society this year in October 2009.

Seminar on '***Cyber crime***' was organized in 2005 February; and the department in Collaboration with CLOPA organized a seminar on '***Child Rights and Child Protection***' in March 2006.

In January 2007 the department organized a UGC and UNDP sponsored Post-Centenary Golden Jubilee International seminar on "***Globalization: Potentialities and Predicaments***", with distinguished sociologists as Prof. Saskia Sassen, Prof. T.K.Oomen, Prof.D.N.Dhanagare, Prof Anand Kumar, Prof V,V, Krishna. Prof. Binay Pattnayak and some other luminaries such as Prof. Utsa Pattnayak and Prof Uday Narayan Singh.

Activities in the department 2009-2011

The department has organized a one-day seminar entitled “**Revisiting Indian Sociological Thinkers**” on the 23rd of February 2010. Special lecture by Sally Boyd Professor of General Linguistics Dept of Philosophy, Linguistics & Theory of Science, University of Gothenburg, Sweden, on “*Why do the Nation States of Europe Need Protection in Legislation? The example of Swedish language policy and legislation since 2000,*” on 8th December 2010; and Dr. Aditi Mitra of Colorado University delivered a lecture on “**Female Body Image: Traditions, Social Construction and Commodification in the Global Marriage market**’ on 11th of January 2011; *Half-Day Workshop on HIV/Aids was conducted by West Bengal State Aids Prevention & Control Society and Trustee AMITIE TRUST* on April 7, 2011; a lecture by Prof. Laura Corradi, University of Calabria, South- Italy, on “**Health, Environment and Gender Intersections**’ on February 28, 2011. The department organized an “**International Seminar on Childhood and Ageing: Contemporary Scenario**”, on the 3rd-4th February 2011, sponsored by Indian Council for Social Science Research, New Delhi, University of Calcutta and Save The Children, Bal Raksha, Bharat, with participating luminaries from Australia, University of Sydney, Prof. Michael Fine an eminent scholar in the field of gerontology and internationally acclaimed scholars from in and around India. The department also organized a seminar titled “**Locating Social, Political and Gender Issues in the Works of Rabindranath Tagore**” on the 26th of September 2011.

In the year of the INTERNATIONAL YOUTH, (2010-2011) UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY is **ORGANIZING** an International seminar titled: “**Meeting Youth Needs in the 21st Century CANADA and INDIA: Youth work, Young people and Youth policy.**” Sponsored by Shastri-Indo-Canadian Institute, New Delhi & University of Calcutta; Date: 28th & 29th November 2011, at Alipore Campus, University of Calcutta Kolkata.

The department has a vibrant Alumni Association that began functioning in 2008.

Dr Annirudha Choudhury an Alumnus of the department is the president of the Alumni Association and Dr. Sudeshna Basu Mukherjee, Associate Professor in the department an alumnus, is the general secretary and Dr Ramanuj Ganguly, Associate Professor in the West Benegal State University, another alumnus of the department is the treasurer of the Alumni Association.

We have a good number of **Alumni** in institutions of eminence such as University of Calcutta, Burdwan University, Kalyani University, Vidyasagar University, West Bengal State University, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur, Bengal Engineering College Shibpur, National University of Juridical Sciences Kolkata and Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology and Deemed University.

Sociology Alumni Association was registered in 2008 and it organized a seminar on **“Emerging Trends of Higher Education: A Sociological Perspective”** at its first Re-Union in 2010 and the second re-union was held in college street campus Ashutosh hall on 3rd July 2011. In future Alumni association proposes to set up a career guidance program for the alumnus.

Welcome the Gray. A Socio-Corporeal Approach to Ageing, Care and Social Inclusion

Dr. Michael Fine*

Abstract

No longer a phenomenon confined to the wealthy economies of North West Europe, the effects of population ageing are increasingly evident on a worldwide scale. Recent figures from the United Nations show that from 1950 – 2000 the proportion of people aged 60 and over increased from 8.2 to 9.1 percent of the total world population. This process of demographic change is projected to accelerate in coming years, reaching 15 per cent by 2025 and 21.1 per cent by 2050. The increase is linked, but cannot be reduced to, declining rates of fertility. In second half of the twentieth century, global life expectancy increased from 46 to 66 years, with projections indicating that at least another ten years will be added by 2050.

Sociologically, population ageing can only be understood as a longer-term outcome of the social transformations that have led to modernity and high modernity. I take issue in this paper with the thesis advanced by Fishman in his high-profile *Shock of the Gray* (2010) that the development leads to an inevitable and enduring social and financial crisis that pits ‘young against old, parent against child and ... nation against nation’.

This paper argues instead for a renewed and vigorous analysis based upon what I term a socio-corporeal approach to the questions of ageing, care and social inclusion. Drawing together new theoretical perspectives with macro and micro level data, I seek to open up questions about the future of global social policy as a necessary means for managing potential conflict within and between generations, families and nations.

Welcome the Gray. A Socio-Corporeal Approach to Ageing, Care and Social Inclusion

Population ageing is no longer a phenomenon confined to the wealthy economies of Western Europe and North America. Instead, its impact is increasingly evident on a worldwide scale. Recent figures from the United Nations (Table 1) show that from 1950 – 2000 the proportion of people aged 60 and over increased from 8.2 to 9.9 per cent of the total world population. This demographic change is projected to accelerate in coming years reaching 11 per cent in 2010, almost 14.9 per cent in 2025 and 21.9 per cent by 2050. In other words, by mid-century at least one in every five people on earth will be of advanced age. In terms of total numbers, this means that there will be over 2 billion older people. Already, in 2010, there are over three quarters of a billion people aged 60 or more on earth – that is more than the entire population of India in 1985, and well over 60 per cent of the estimated Indian population (1.2b) in 2010.

Table 1. Proportion of Total Population aged 60 or over

		1950	2010	2030	2050
Africa	Population (m)	12.1	55.4	104.9	212.8
	<i>Pct of total population</i>	<i>5.3</i>	<i>5.4</i>	<i>6.9</i>	<i>10.6</i>
Asia	Population (m)	94.5	413.6	821.2	1236.1
	<i>Pct</i>	<i>6.7</i>	<i>9.9</i>	<i>16.7</i>	<i>23.7</i>
Europe	Population (m)	66.3	160.9	211.7	236.4
	<i>Pct</i>	<i>12.1</i>	<i>22.0</i>	<i>29.3</i>	<i>34.2</i>
South America	Population (m)	6.3	40.4	80.3	125.3
	<i>Pct</i>	<i>5.6</i>	<i>10.3</i>	<i>17.5</i>	<i>26.0</i>
Northern America	Population (m)	21.3	64.6	105.1	124.7
	<i>Pct</i>	<i>12.4</i>	<i>18.4</i>	<i>25.6</i>	<i>27.8</i>
Oceania	Population (m)	1.4	5.5	9.3	12.2
	<i>Pct</i>	<i>11.1</i>	<i>15.4</i>	<i>21.0</i>	<i>23.9</i>
India	Population (m)	20.1	91.7	184.6	315.6
	<i>Pct</i>	<i>5.4</i>	<i>7.5</i>	<i>12.4</i>	<i>19.6</i>
World	Population (m)	204.9	759.1	1370.4	2008.2
	<i>Pct</i>	<i>8.1</i>	<i>11.0</i>	<i>16.5</i>	<i>21.9</i>

Source : Author's calculations based on United Nations Secretariat, World Population Prospects: 2008 Revision, Medium variant, <http://esa.un.org/unpp>, January 05, 2011.

The predictability of the demographic transition to an ageing society has clearly contributed to its visibility and prominence for policy makers (Johnson et al., 2005). Given the long lead time involved in population ageing (it takes a full 60 years before a child born today will be 60 years old) and the relatively small degree of uncertainty concerning

the predictions, the reliability of the figures contrasts markedly with more volatile, less predictable changes such as economic crises, wild and unpredictable weather and catastrophic natural events such as earth quakes, tsunamis and cyclones. Yet it would be a mistake to understand the gradual but predictable process as autonomous, a demographic feature that, which determining other outcomes, takes place of its own accord. Rather, population ageing is best understood as the outcome or consequence of a range of other social processes, a lagging indicator of other changes including those that have led to a lengthening of life expectancy and those have ushered in lowered rates of fertility (U.N., 2002).

As shown in Table 2, life expectancy increased across the world in the 60 years from 1950-2010, adding an additional twenty years to the average person's life. Fertility also fell, with two fewer children born, on average, to each woman in 2005-10 than 60 years earlier. These social phenomena were not confined to the advanced economies but were evident in each continent, and indeed the magnitude of the change has generally been greater in the less developed and developing nations than in the more developed parts of the world. Longer lives and fewer children are the two most direct demographic causes of world ageing, but each in turn reflects longer-term processes of fundamental social, environmental and technological change (Olshansky and Ault, 1986; McMichael, 2001). The link between modernity and ageing is evident in global representations of demography that depict general population measures such as the aged dependency or 'elderly support ratio'¹. Mapping this measure reveals the cartography of economic development (PRB, 2010: 4).

Table 2. Life expectancy at birth and total fertility rate 1950-2050

Area		1950-55	2005-10	2025-30	2045-50
Africa	Life Exp (yrs)^a	38.7	54.1	61.2	67.4
	<i>Total Fertility Rate^b</i>	<i>6.63</i>	<i>4.61</i>	<i>3.23</i>	<i>2.4</i>
Asia	Life Exp (yrs)	41.2	68.9	73.6	76.8
	<i>Total Fertility Rate</i>	<i>5.73</i>	<i>2.35</i>	<i>2.01</i>	<i>1.9</i>
Europe	Life Exp (yrs)	65.6	75.1	78.9	81.5
	<i>Total Fertility Rate</i>	<i>2.65</i>	<i>1.5</i>	<i>1.65</i>	<i>1.8</i>
S. America	Life Exp (yrs)	52	73	77.1	79.8
	<i>Total Fertility Rate</i>	<i>5.66</i>	<i>2.18</i>	<i>1.76</i>	<i>1.8</i>
N. America	Life Exp (yrs)	68.8	79.3	81.6	83.5
	<i>Total Fertility Rate</i>	<i>3.33</i>	<i>2.04</i>	<i>1.84</i>	<i>1.85</i>
Oceania	Life Exp (yrs)	60.4	76.4	79.7	82.1
	<i>Total Fertility Rate</i>	<i>3.83</i>	<i>2.44</i>	<i>2.18</i>	<i>1.98</i>
India	Life Exp (yrs)	37.9	63.5	69.4	73.3
	<i>Total Fertility Rate</i>	<i>5.91</i>	<i>2.76</i>	<i>1.96</i>	<i>1.85</i>
World	Life Expectancy (yrs)	46.6	67.6	72.1	75.5
	<i>Total Fertility Rate</i>	<i>4.92</i>	<i>2.56</i>	<i>2.21</i>	<i>2.02</i>

Notes: a. Life expectancy at birth in years, both sexes combined; b. Total fertility rate: children per woman.

¹ Calculated as the number of people of working-age (15 to 64) is divided by the number aged 65 or over.

Source : Author's calculations based on United Nations Secretariat, World Population Prospects : 2008 Revision, Medium variant, <http://esa.un.org/unpp>, January 05, 2011.

At its most general, population ageing, I contend, is best understood as the longer-term demographic outcome of the social transformations associated with modernity and high modernity. Yet there are surprisingly little attention given to ageing in the classical sociological accounts of modernity and few contemporary mainstream sociological analyses that provide it with more than a passing reference. While it is perhaps not surprising that Marx, Durkheim and Weber and other founding fathers of the discipline laid emphasis on more fundamental features of economy and society, the lack of reference to ageing amongst most contemporary sociological commentators, including such high-profile generalists as Giddens, Beck, Foucault, Bourdieu, Bauman and Castells, calls for debate. The limited mentions are all the more striking given the determinate position that ageing has been accorded in a number of influential contemporary analyses that might be thought of as

feeding the public imagination of a popular sociology. Before moving to consider the links between ageing, care and social inclusion, I briefly address two of many such accounts.

The first is a powerful report on global aging published by the CIA in 2001 – ironically the UN's International Year of Older Persons. *Long-Term Global Demographic Trends: Reshaping the Geopolitical Landscape* examines the demographic challenges faced by different nations and assesses how these are translated into 'security issues of interest to the United States' (CIA, 2001: 3). It argues that population ageing is associated with other demographic trends such as urbanisation and migration, and over the coming decades will have far-reaching consequences for global economic, military and political power. The power of Japan and Europe, for example, are predicted to decline over coming decades due to the economic costs of supporting an aging population and the reduced vitality of their ageing and proportionally much reduced workforces. The manpower challenge that will confront their military, too, is identified as a likely constraint on their willingness to 'face up to' the need for military interventions in 'global hotspots'. Similarly, an ageing population and large and growing urban concentrations are seen as likely to restrict economic growth in China with potential impacts on for political stability, while in Russia, 'an unhealthy declining population-especially among working-age males' is said to be set to affect economic growth and domestic stability (CIA, 2001 : 8). In contrast, low levels of ageing due to high birth rates are projected to continue in many Islamic countries, outstripping limited employment opportunities and fuelling the potential for instability and militancy in these countries. The youth bulge and other demographic factors in a number of relatively unstable countries, according to the CIA's report, will 'heighten existing tensions and exacerbate other factors that precipitate conflict'.

An important strand of the CIA's analysis concerns the economic impacts of sustaining large and non-productive surplus populations. With the public debt rising in ageing countries as social spending increases, they argue that pressure increases on interest rates, crowding out productive investment. Presciently, in 2001, they identified how fiscal policies intended to manage ageing would put pressure on regional economic collaborations such as the European Monetary Union (responsible for the Euro). The report also suggests that capital flows are likely to change, as fast-ageing countries (Europe and N. America) export more capital than those ageing at a much slower rate and enjoying more vigorous economic growth. As the existing industrialised countries become focussed on measures to deal with the economic burden and crises associated with ageing populations, the report suggests that the United States will be left to assume a larger role in sustaining financial and humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping and military interventions. Alongside the direct

demographic consequences, the approach taken by the CIA thus emphasises projected negative fiscal and economic effects of ageing populations for geopolitical strategy. Ageing, in this view, is a problem, not an achievement.

A more recent but equally high profile examination of the ageing of the world's population by Ted Fishman develops many of the same themes, although focussing less on issues of military strategic interest and more on the implications for individuals, families and corporations (Fishman, 2010). Fishman is a documentary journalist whose approach to investigative journalism, to judge from this and his previous best-selling book on the rise of Chinese economic power, seems to involve weaving together geopolitical history and future conjecture with personal observations and a strand of tabloid alarm. Together with what one commentator described as the longest sub-title of any contemporary book, the title of his book (*Shock of Gray. The Aging of the world's population and how it pits young against old, child against parent, worker against boss, company against rival and nation against nation*) suggests much of what it is to follow. For Fishman, ageing is the unseen hand transforming the world, changing social and economic life first in North America, Europe, Japan and then, gradually spreading with unstoppable momentum through the rest of the world in irreversible ways. While painting detailed pen portraits of the individuals and communities concerned, he seeks to draw attention to the subtlety and ubiquity of the process as well as its profound economic and social impacts.

Fishman argues, for example, that ageing is the hidden force behind globalisation (Fishman, 2010 : 340-357). Corporations, he notes, seek to move production from high labour cost ageing countries to low cost countries with youthful workforces. Ageing in this view, is thus a direct cause of the process, rather than a consequence of other changes that demographers and historians have identified as leading to what they term the first and second demographic transformations (van de Kaa, 1987; Kertzer and Lasslett, 1995; Golini, 1997). Social policies associated with industrialisation, including increased and enhanced public health measures, increasing education and the spread of sufficiency if not affluence, enhanced public policy and a general improvements to and reductions in inequality of life chances that have accrued to the populations of ageing societies (McMichael, 2001) are all obscured in this perspective. So too are the broader economic transformations such as enhanced productivity that lead to increasing national well being that create the opportunity for investment in the dirty industries of industrial production to be sent off-shore while post-industrial employment in service and knowledge industries develops (Castells, 1998, 2000).

Ageing is also the unseen hand that Fishman portrays as causing a deterioration in the lives of younger generations, leading to declining expenditures on education and to degraded and casualised employment for the marginalised newcomers to the labour force (Fishman, 2010: 209-269). The generations that are today older, especially the baby-boomers born in the first decades after WWII, he accuses of have led privileged lives and of commandeering resources that are needed elsewhere. In turn, the need to underwrite this support and to service this debt holds back families, communities and national governments responsible for supporting older people. Despite brief excursions in which he describes ageing communities in Japan and Spain and explores the biology of ageing, his analysis assumes the unbalanced social policies of the United States as a necessary fiscal and financial model. Here the entrenchment of the rights of older people to public and private pensions and to relatively generous public health care support while there is a disinvestment in education spending and any comparable form of welfare support is denied younger people, has readily led to problems that U.S. commentators have termed 'intergenerational conflict' (Hudson, 2010; Myles, 2010).

Alongside this pessimistic analysis, Fishman contributes his journalistic observations of ageing communities. In this he often shows a sensitive and at times poignant personal awareness of the simultaneous value, fragility and cost old age. Using anecdotes from his own family and observations of life in places such as Florida ('Gods waiting room'), Spain ('a senior moment') and the post-industrial city of Rockford Illinois ('the twisting fates of the screw capital') he imaginatively captures some of the many subtle changes to everyday life, families, communities and nations that the demographic transformation heralds. In these life sketches he seeks to convey positive as well as negative features of population ageing to his readers. It is not the description of these scenes from everyday life, but the analysis which is wrong. My point here is not to demonise Fishman or to send up his attempts to make real for readers the significance of the changes an ageing society involves. Rather, I seek to identify in the issue of causality the key failure of his analysis, and to suggest an alternative approach—one in which I hope to make clear why it is that we should welcome the grey, rather than find in it a cause for shock and horror.

Like many other purveyors of what has been dubbed 'apocalyptic demography' (Evans et al., 2001) Fishman seizes on the demographic changes involved as a tool to berate the advanced economies for supporting such large numbers of dependent, unproductive, older people. In this approach he is a captive of a model of human capital that locates value in youth and in competition. His analysis is presented as 'common sense' that is illustrated by, rather than developed from, his observation of life in ageing communities and his uncritical immersion in current American policies. In universalising what at crucial points

is essentially a neo-conservative economic attack on the support provided older people, he condemns many of the ideas such as redistribution and risk sharing that underlie social policy in most advanced liberal democracies. To do so he focuses not on the forms of public and private right that append to old age in the United States, nor key institutional mechanisms, such as the American health care and pension systems, nor on the seemingly arbitrary cultural hegemony that the market and the individual seem to enjoy in that country. Instead his focus is on the ageing people themselves, effectively blaming those who are old for simply continuing with living.

A Socio-Corporeal Approach

To avoid confusing cause and effect in linking the social (including the economic and political) with the physiological process of ageing and the demographic impact on population, it is important to be explicit about the conceptual framework employed. This is essential in sociological research, as it is in other fields. Such a theory or framework must be able to disentangle factors which shape social processes, actions and possibilities from those which are outcomes. Such an approach should not assume simple linear causality, because social life is simply too complex for that. Events that are at one point in time a consequence can, in turn, also condition and shape subsequent events. Similarly, multiple causality, and interaction between many different factors at once, make determining simple cause and effect difficult if not impossible.

In the final section of this paper I present a brief outline of the framework that has guided much of my work over the past decade and briefly discuss its applicability to two of the key social issues that confront us when discussing ageing populations – care and social inclusion. My intention is not to claim to be the originator of a new tradition of sociology and ageing – there is already a rich history of such theorising and empirical research in this field (Johnson et al., 2005; Dannefer and Phillipson, 2010) on which I draw constantly and which all of us working in this field must aim to develop. Neither is it original to point to ageing being a bodily process. Instead, I merely aim here to make explicit a simple practical or phronetic framework (Flyvbjerg, 2001) which can guide thinking on research and analysis, providing a means through which to integrate sociological understandings of ageing with contemporary physiological realities.

While ageing must be understood as a phenomenon that occurs in the first instance at the biological level, it is also a social phenomenon that is not reducible to biology. Neither can it be understood as a purely social construction, where growing old is treated exclusively as an artefact of culture or social structure. Both the body and social processes need to be

considered together, not as distinct and independent phenomena but as two intricately interconnected aspects of a single entity (Fine, 2005). Changes in one aspect have implications for the other although this is clearly not a simple reflex or repeated response. The interactions between the body and social processes are inevitably complex and profound, as are developments within each of these separate spheres.

In modernity and high modernity, ageing is in many ways in danger of being understood simply as a manifestation or expression of physiological biology that is properly the terrain of medical professionals. The life of individual organisms, including humans, involves growing older. This leads eventually to the expression of physiological ageing and the potential accumulation of illnesses and disability, as well as to changes in cognitive capacity and potential decline in psychological functioning. These physiologically based changes are all readily assimilated into a medical model so that the key scientific disciplines concerned today with ageing are, not surprisingly, the medical and allied medical professions (Illich, 1975; Arluke and Peterson, 1981). But while ageing is a physiological process, it is marked and given symbolic and practical expression through social processes. Social age can be distinguished from chronological age and that in turn from biological ageing. There is overlap between each of these concepts, but also important differences.

Bringing together, while also clearly distinguishing an understanding of the social and corporeal components of ageing, is essential if we are to be able to unpack the ideological mystification that surrounds old age, and the treatment of those who are considered as aged, in contemporary societies. Retirement is clearly a social convention, enabled only on a mass scale where work has been structured around relations of employment and where formal rights of entitlement to supplementary non-wage income can be established (Mann, 2001). Similarly, the third age (Laslett, 1995) could only be distinguished from the physical decline of advanced old age, the so-called fourth age, by deconstructing the social category of 'old age' to reveal a hidden life phase of physical capability amongst those of retirement age who are old but not yet inactive. The current flexibilities emerging with the restructuring of the life course as the 'tripartite institutionalisation' of age (childhood, adulthood and old age) so closely associated with the industrial model is gradually giving way (Kohli, 1986; Kohli and Rein, 1991; Blatterer, 2007), provides strong evidence for the interplay of both social and bodily aspects of ageing. In a similar way, the socio-corporeal framework helps provide the conceptual tools necessary to approach the complex topics of care and social inclusion.

Care, I have argued elsewhere, must be understood as a necessary social response to human bodily vulnerability (Fine, 2007 : 173-78). Each human being has a need for care that emerges as a result of our inherent physiological dependency at different points in our life. Old age, and the ageing process, is a period of the life-course where bodily needs for additional support increase – although not universally. How those arrangements for care are met depends on the social contingencies encountered by the individual in need of care. While it is commonly undertaken within the family, a task commonly relegated to women as many feminists have pointed out, this is not inevitably or essentially so. Increasingly, in advanced and affluent societies, additional resources are brought to bear. In part this occurs because expert professional interventions beyond the unskilled capacity of family provide have become possible through technological invention and development. In part additional extra-familial sources of support have become available because they are needed, as the division of labour requires commitment and dependability of most people of employable age requiring additional assistance from specialised care staff. And in part, the possibility emerges as a desirable good that can be made available purely as a privilege for those who can afford it, or through more collective means, as an expression of social concern and recognition supported through public social policies (Fine, 2007). Clearly there is no single approach which is universally encountered. Rather different solutions to the bodily need for care are developed in different social contexts. Older people, importantly, are not just recipients of care, but are major providers in their own right – to children and grandchildren, as well as to partners and others who are themselves old.

This public, collective response to providing necessary forms of support suggests also the way in which other forms of support, engagement and recognition are also undertaken. Old age, to give its social definition in advanced societies, can be thought of as the period of detachment of workers and their families from employment on the basis of their age. But what forms of engagement are there to help sustain interaction between those who are marked out as old and those of other ages ? Again, the socio-corporeal approach helps ensure attention to the ways in which practices of social inclusion are implemented (Levitas, 2005; Fine, 2010).

In an extended presentation I would like to develop these themes and explore the links between population ageing, the development of social policies for care and social inclusion, and population ageing. Here, in the short time available, I have tried to suggest their importance and hopefully helped develop some dialogue on the value of a socio-corporeal approach to ageing. I conclude by emphasising the key point of my presentation – that population ageing has been associated with positive and beneficial social developments to date and that this reflects the fact that ageing is a product of more progressive and beneficial

social developments. Understanding its impact requires a sociological imaginary that links bodily needs to social processes – not in a mechanical, medicalised sort of way, but in a contingent and open way. Problematic solutions to the required are, of course highly likely – and that is what authors such as Fishman need to focus upon. But to identify ageing as a shock, and to confine our responses to it to negative punitive ones would clearly be a mistake.

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Policies and Programmes for Senior Citizens in India :

Some emerging Issues

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Introduction

Ageing of population and extension of life are significant by-products of the demographic transition. The elderly population is 76.6 millions, as per 2001 census, which constitutes 7.5 percent of the total population. And the sex ratio (number of females per thousand males) has been more favourable among persons 60+ than in the general population. The advent of modernisation, industrialisation, urbanisation, occupational differentiation, education, and growth of individual philosophy have eroded the traditional values that vested authority with elderly. Although family support and care of the elderly are unlikely to disappear in the near future, family care of the elderly seems likely to decrease as the country develop economically and modernize in other respects. The older Persons have become increasingly vulnerable not only due to their physical disabilities, but also due to social, economic, psychological and health related issues

Despite the lack of capacity especially of poorer households, the family and community remains the main source of physical, material and emotional support for older people. The traditional family and community are undergoing rapid corrosion in their structures. Poor family collapse under these pressures and their ability to provide care for the elderly is also corroded under the pressures of modernization first and then globalization. Government efforts and policies to strengthen and develop support systems, which will help the family structure, continue to provide traditional security cover to the aged. The government announced a National Policy for Older Persons (NPOP) in January 1999, which aims to strengthen their legitimate place in society and help them to live the last phase of their life with purpose, dignity and peace with the help of family, community, state and the private sector (Government of India, 1999). The year 2000 was observed as the National year of older persons by the government of India. Given the level of urbanization and industrialization in India, economic factors and diminishing value systems are likely to make welfare of the aged as the most critical area of social welfare, social sciences and geriatrics. Efforts have to be made to enlarge the scope of social security schemes. A holistic approach to population ageing taking social, economic and cultural changes into consideration is needed to effectively solve the emerging problems of the elderly. Based on the existing diversities in the ageing process, it may be stated that there is a need to pay

greater attention to the increasing awareness on the ageing issues and its socioeconomic effects and to promote the development of policies and programmes for dealing with an ageing society.

Demographic Profile

Fertility level reductions, reinforced by steady increase in the life expectancy have produced fundamental changes in the age structure of the population, which in turn leads to an ageing population. The analysis of historical patterns of mortality and fertility decline in India indicates that although the mortality figures had started improving in 1920's, population ageing intensified in the 1990's with the impact of fertility decline on successive birth cohorts (Goyal, 1997). The older population of India, which was 56.7 million in 1991, is expected to grow to 137 million by 2021. In terms of its proportion, from 5.1 percent of the total population in 1901, it is projected to be 7.7 percent of the total population of the country by the year 2001. Those who live in rural areas constitute 78 percent of the total older population.

Demographic Aspects	Total	Male	Female
60+ Population (in millions)	76.6	37.8	38.8
Percentage of 60+ population	7.4	7.1	7.8
Decadal growth rate of 60+	35.2	28.6	42.2
Old age dependency ratio (Number of 60+ per 100 persons in the 15-59 age group)	13.1	12.4	13.8
Literacy rate of 60+	36.3	52.8	20.3
Non-Worker percentage among 60+	59.7	39.7	79.1
Marital Status of 60+ (%) Never			
Married	2.0	2.5	1.5
Married	64.5	82.1	47.3
Widowed	33.1	15.0	50.7
Divorced /			
Separate	0.4	0.3	0.5
Percentage of rural elderly		75.0	
Sex Ratio (Number of females per 1000 males)		1029	
Percentage of 60+ below Poverty Line		33	

Source: Census of India, 2001

Interestingly, the decadal percentage growth in the older population for the period 1991-2001 would be more than double the rate of increase in the general population at 37.2 percent. The average years of the remaining life for those in ages 60 plus in 1901, was 9 years for men and 9.3 years for women; whereas, for 2001, the remaining life span for 60 plus men would go to 18.3 years and for women will be 20 years (Karkal, 1998). In addition,

the percentage of females above 60 years out of the total female population has always been more than the corresponding percentage of males. While in 1996, 6.68 percent of females and 6.67 percent of males were aged 60 years and above, these figures are projected to rise up to 9.3 percent for females and 8.6 percent for males by the year 2016. Life expectancy at birth is highly varied across states: demographically disadvantaged states such as, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa have lowest life expectancy at birth and states like Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat have higher life expectancy. The data on old age dependency ratio reveals a slow increase in both rural and urban areas, which both for men and women, the figure is quite higher in rural areas than urban. Quite interestingly, female old age dependency ratio in the rural areas is lower than the male old age dependency ratio while a reverse scenario exists in the urban areas.

Issues of Elderly

Indian society lays stress on traditional norms and values such as respect and care for the elderly; as a result, older members were taken care by the family itself. The family, commonly the joint family type, and social networks provided an environment in which the elderly spent their lives engaging themselves in religious activities, rearing grand children and other pursuits, fulfilling their needs in respect of social, psychological and economic security.

Such a system of mutual support is not possible in a modern, industrial society. Assessing the impact of forthcoming social change on the status of elderly, D' Souza (1982) apprehended that transition from agrarian to urbanized and industrialized society; joint family type to unitary family type; and increasing emphasis on the individual as a unit would certainly lead to deterioration in the position of the elderly. The advent of modernization, industrialization, urbanisation, secularization, occupational differentiation, education, and growth of individualism has eroded the traditional values that vested authority with the elderly. These have led to defiance and decline of respect for elders among members of younger generation (Nayar, 1987).

As the countries of Asia develop economically and modernize in other respects, family care of the elderly seems likely to decrease, although unlikely to disappear in the near future (UNESCAP, 1991). Gore (1993), while analyzing resource allocations among different age groups, opined that in developed countries population ageing has resulted in a substantial shift in emphasis between social programmes causing a significant change in the share of those going to older age groups. But in a developing society, like India, these transfers will take place informally and will be accompanied by high social and

psychological costs by way of intra-familial misunderstanding and strife. The rapid growth in the number of older population present issues, barely perceived as yet, must be addressed if social and economic development is to proceed effectively.

It can no longer be assumed that our elderly live comfortably at home receiving care from family members, due to demographic changes in the society and the changing family context. The government efforts and policies generally direct to strengthen the family and develop support systems, which will help the family structure to continue to provide traditional security cover to the aged. However, government and society are aware of the socio-economic pressure on the exiting time tested traditional institution and realize that positive steps are required to cater to the newly emerging needs of the growing number of the aged, especially the poor who lack adequate support of family and community.

National Policy on Older Persons (NPOP) :

The Government of India launched the national policy during the International Year of the Older Persons (1999). An inter-ministerial committee of 22 ministries and departments, state inter-departmental committees and a National Council for Older Persons were constituted to oversee the implementation of NPOP. A committee was formed in 2010 to review this policy in major areas : issues about the oldest old, safety and security, health care and gender perspectives to promote the health and welfare of senior citizens in India.

The policy aims to ensure the well being of the elderly while viewing the life cycle as a continuum. It values an age-integrated society and aims to build support systems to strengthen the family institution for the elderly, recognizing that elderly is a resource to society. The policy encourages individuals to make provision for their own as well as their spouse's old age and for families to take care of older members. The policy supports voluntary and non-governmental organizations to supplement care provided by the family and provide protection to elderly people. Health care, research, creation of awareness and training facilities to geriatric caregivers are under this policy. The policy aims to cover the following areas for the welfare of the elderly: 1) Financial Security, 2) Health Care and Nutrition 3) Shelter 4) Education 5) Welfare 6) Protection of life and property 7) Other Areas of action 8) Non-governmental organizations:

The NPOP sees the elderly as a huge untapped resource and initiates efforts to make family members appreciate and respect the contribution of older persons. While there is no substitute for family as far as care for older people is concerned, there are numerous situational constraints which compel some aged in India to seek institutional services. Problems like absence of close relatives to look after, migration of children from village to towns and sometimes to foreign countries in search of opportunities, and bitter interpersonal relations force the elderly to seek institutional care. The NPOP also covers other areas that lend support to the elderly within the society's institutional framework.

Financial security

- Security of income
- Old age pensions
- Settlement of pension, provident fund and gratuity
- Pension schemes
- Income tax rebates
- Tax concessions for caregivers
- Saving instruments during gainful employment
- Removal of ageism
- Strengthen the right to support from their children

Health care and Nutrition

- Proposes a judicious mix of various health care services
- Strengthen the primary health care system
- Provision of health educational material

- Development of health insurance packages
- Promotion of charitable societies and voluntary agencies
- Setting up of geriatric wards
- Training and orientation of medical and para-medical personnel
- Strengthening mental health services

Shelter

- Earmark 10% government housing schemes
- Elder – friendly layouts
- Encouragement of group housing
- Education, training and orientation for those associated with housing sector
- Access to information on prevention of accidents and other related measures
- Special consideration in matters related to transfer of property mutation, property tax etc.

Education

- Provide education, training and information
- Removal of discriminations
- Development of out – reach programmes in educational centres

Welfare

- Priority for vulnerable elderly
- Encourage non-institutional services
- Assistance to voluntary organisations
- Set up of welfare fund
- Recognizes the need for plurality of arrangements for welfare services

Protection of life and property

- Protection from abuse at home
- Assistance to voluntary organisations and associations through helpline, legal aid and other measures
- Direct police to keep a friendly vigil – promote interaction with neighbourhood associations – provide precautionary measures

Other areas of action

- Issue of identity cards – concessions in transport and other provisions for their comfortable travel
- Priority in gas and telephone connections
- Speedy disposal of complaints

Non- Government Organisations

- Recognises the NGO sector to provide user friendly affordable services
- Networking among NGOs

- Formation of self help groups and associations
- Provide training and orientation for volunteers and encourage them to assist the home bound elderly
- Cooperation between Government and Non-Government agencies

Family

- Recognises importance of strengthening family support
- Promotion of family values to increase inter-generational bonds
- Encouragement to children to co-reside with their elders

Research

- Need a database on older persons
- Strengthen research activity on ageing
- Setup of an inter-disciplinary coordinating body on research
- Establishment of National Institute of Research Training and Documentation and Resource Centres

Training of Manpower

- Recognises the importance of trained manpower in geriatrics and gerontology
- Assistance for development and organisation of sensitisation programmes for legislative, judicial and executive wings

Media

- Aims to involve mass media as well as informal and traditional communication channels

Implementation of NPOP

The National Policy on Older Persons has an action plan that has the potential to help in wide dissemination. The Policy affects senior citizens, if implemented by the government and other institutions responsible as well as if individuals pursue their respective roles for the well-being of older persons. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment coordinates the implementation of the Policy and a separate Bureau of Older Persons has been set up. An Inter-Ministerial Committee monitors its progress while states are encouraged to set up separate Directorates of Older Persons and machinery for coordination and monitoring.

The Five Year and Annual Action Plans are prepared by each Ministry to implement aspects which concern them, indicating steps to ensure benefits to elderly. A review prepared by the nodal Ministry on the implementation of the National Policy is aimed to be carried out every three years with non-official participation in the preparation of the document. Moreover, an autonomous National Council for Older Persons headed by the Minister for Social Justice & Empowerment has also been set up to promote and co-ordinate the concerns of older persons. The Council will include representatives of relevant Central Ministries and the Planning commission. An independent registered National Association of Older Persons (NAOP) has been also established to mobilize senior citizens, articulate their interests, promote and undertake programmes and activities for their well being and to advise the Government on all matters relating to the Older Persons. Panchayati Raj institutions are encouraged to participate in the implementation of the National Policy, address local level issues and needs of the ageing and implement programmes for them.

In order to ensure effective implementation of the policy at different levels, from time to time, the help of experts of public administrations shall be taken to prepare the details of organizational set up for the implementation, coordination and monitoring of the policy.

Some crucial issues NPOP is to focus on include :

- Heterogeneity
- Health Issues
- Women/Gender Issues
- Inter-generational Issues

- Economic and Social Security Issues
- Security and Law and Order
- NGO Programmes
- Networking of Organizations
- Elder Abuse
- Multiple Vulnerability
- Spirituality

Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007:

It includes Maintenance of Parents and Senior Citizens, Application for maintenance, jurisdiction and procedure, enforcement of order of cases etc. It envisages the Establishment of Old Age Homes for indigent senior citizens in a district for 150 elderly. Provisions of medical care for Senior Citizens: state governments ensure special facilities such as beds in government aided hospitals, special queue, special medical officers etc. The act also includes Protection of Life and Property of Senior Citizens including measures for awareness, publicity etc.

Programmes and Schemes :

The major programmes and schemes initiated by the ministry include :

- **Integrated Programmes for Older Persons :** Aim is to improve the quality of life of older persons by providing basic amenities such as shelter, food, medical care and entertainment and encouraging productive and active ageing through capacity building of government/non-governmental organizations/panchayats/local bodies etc. IPOP through two schemes (Constitution of Old Age Homes and Multi-service Centers) set up 364 old age homes, 311 day care centres, 61 mobile medicare units and 2 non-institutional services.
- **National Institute of Social Defence (NISD) :** National Initiative on Care for Elderly (NICE) Project was developed by National Institute of Social Defence, of the

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment aims to develop frontline personnel of geriatric care givers.

- International Day of Older Persons (IDOP) : celebrated on 1st October to promote inter-generational bonding.
- National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS): launched by the Ministry of Rural Development on 15th August, 1995 for pension at 200 rupees/month, to be supplemented by atleast an equal contribution by the states so that each beneficiary gets at least Rs. 400/month.

Emerging Issues

A large number of programmes have been undertaken in the last 10-15 years but largely uncoordinated leaving little impact on the ground. In addition, of those that are implemented, may be mainly ad hoc initiatives rather than long term continuing programmes which does not take into account the sustainability of welfare measures for the elderly. Moreover, when it comes to implementation, the major problem is that there are no well-defined central and regional monitoring/evaluation mechanisms, which makes impact/effectiveness difficult to assess, and thus further improvements on such programmes is not undertaken. There is also meager data which can help to determine programme coverage at the grassroots level, which makes it difficult to determine the number of beneficiaries, leaving the success of the programmes and schemes questionable. Besides, programme benefits reach few elder citizens especially in rural areas and those below the poverty line, who seldom have the resources to even access the benefits, let alone able to complete the bureaucratic details necessary to receive such benefits.

Conclusion :

In order to maximize the efficiency of implementation of the policies and programmes, some suggestions have been outlined so as to ensure that benefits are reached by the elderly in due time. Primary of these is the advocacy efforts by the community which is a foundation step necessary in order to formulate a state policy for the welfare of the elderly. Once such policies are in place, an action plan with details like implementing agencies/ministries, scope and coverage, resources allocated and time frame for implementation can then be decided upon for actual progress on the ground for realization of benefits to the elderly. The coordinating nodal ministry must establish an oversight group to monitor and evaluate programme implementation so that all funds allocated towards benefiting the elderly actually reach the target beneficiaries. For such efforts, it is also vital that outside organization

such as NGOs and those from other sectors realign programmes in tune with national policies so as to realize maximum benefit towards the well-being and care of senior citizens in our society. There is great expectation from the revised NPOP through which the above issues can be considered and implemented for elderly welfare.

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Childhood - The Legal Perspectives.

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Paper presented at the **international seminar on CHILDHOOD AND AGEING : CONTEMPORARY SCENARIO** on February 3 -4, 2011, organized by the department of Sociology, University of Kolkata.

Abstract

Who is a child ? What is childhood ? When does childhood cease or begin ? These simple questions have complex answers in the Indian legal system.

The law, policy and practice of child welfare have undergone significant changes from a cultural, historical and legal perspective. Legislation did not deal with childhood as a period of life that needs special measures of protection until the early-19th century. It was only during the 20th century that the concept of children's rights emerged. This shift in focus from the 'welfare' to the 'rights' approach is significant. The rights perspective is embodied in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), 1989, which is a landmark in international human rights legislation. India ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in December 1992. The Convention sets no minimum age at which children can begin expressing their views freely, nor does it limit the contexts in which children can express their views.

Childhood in Indian laws is a term indicating capacity, and a term of special protection. The age of majority will determine issues such as criminal responsibility, marriage, employment, sexual consent, and access to education, competency as witness and, right to participation. Several provisions in the Constitution of India impose on the State the primary responsibility of ensuring that all the needs of children are met and that their basic human rights are fully protected. Every law provides its own definition of the term 'child'. Some refer to a child as a person who has not completed the age of 18 years and in some statutes a child is defined as a person below 16 years and in other statutes it is 14 years. The age of marriage is 18 but the age of consent for sexual intercourse is lower than 18 years. In India the courts ask the views depending on the age and maturity of children. The Supreme Court has also noted that different laws specify different ages while defining a child and there are various contradictions between these legislations.

There are several inconsistencies in Indian law, regarding the definition of a child and the actual scope of child rights. This paper will examine the concept of childhood in various provisions in Indian laws and case laws. It will deal with questions such as :

- Are there any criteria or scientific parameters for determining childhood ?
- Are these definitions in consonance with the CRC which India has ratified ?
- How do the Indian Courts deal with the concept of child and childhood ?
- What are the contradictions in the legal provisions relating to the concept of childhood ?
- Is a uniform definition for childhood possible ?
- Is the best interest of the child a guiding norm ?

Keywords; CHILD, AGE, CHILDHOOD, LAWS, INDIA

Childhood - The Legal Perspectives¹

Status of Childhood in India

Childhood is considered as the most enjoyable and unique period of ones life.

A good start in life means that each and every child, from infancy wards, has the right to live in a nurturing, caring and a safe environment that enables [the child] to survive and be physically healthy, mentally alert, emotionally secure, socially competent and able to learn....But what kind of a childhood are we talking about with over 3 million children living on the streets or over 150 million children working as bonded laborers? There is no joy of childhood for that one out of every six girl child who does not live to see her 15th birthday? The statement that children are the future of the nation becomes hollow when only 50% of children have access to education? or 58% of India's children below the age of 2 years are not fully vaccinated or 24% of these children do not receive any form of vaccination. Can childhood be joyful for those more that 50% of India's children who are malnourished or for those 1 out of 4 girls who is sexually abused before the age of 4.²

Who is a Child in India?

To even have a chance of realizing child rights, you must first be recognized by law. Who is a child ? When does childhood cease or begin ? How does State perceive childhood?

¹ Paper presented by Prof Asha Bajpai at the international seminar on CHILDHOOD AND AGEING : CONTEMPORARY SCENARIO on February 3-4, 2011, organized by the Department of Sociology, University of Kolkata

² www.sharanamcentre.org/htm/stat visited on 1.2.201



These simple questions have complex answers. Most of the old world's civilizations did not consider children human beings with full human value. Thus, childhood was not an independent social category until the beginning of the 18th century. Legislation did not deal with childhood as a period of life that needs special measures of protection until the early-19th century. In his book, *L'enfant ET la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Regime*, Philippe Aries said that the child in the Middle Ages did not exist as an independent anthropological category and therefore children did not need to be taken into consideration¹

The law, policy and practice of child welfare have undergone significant changes from an historical perspective. Before 1839, authority and control was important. It was an established common law doctrine that the father had absolute rights over his children. After this, the welfare principle was reflected in the dominant ideology of the family. Victorian judges, who developed the welfare principle, favored one dominant family form. The traditional Indian view of welfare is based on *daya, dana, dakshina, bhiksha, ahimsa, samya-bhava, swadharma and tyaga*, the essence of which were self-discipline, self-sacrifice and consideration for others. It was believed that the wellbeing of children depended on these values.² Children were recipients of welfare measures. It was only during the 20th century that the concept of children's rights emerged. This shift in focus from the 'welfare' to the 'rights' approach is significant. Rights are entitlements. They also imply obligations and goals. The rights approach is primarily concerned with issues of social justice, non-discrimination, equity and empowerment. The rights perspective is embodied in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), 1989, which is a landmark in international human rights legislation. India ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in December 1992².

Today, nearly all cultures share the view that the younger the child the more vulnerable she/he is physically and psychologically and the less able to fend for herself/himself. Age limits are a formal reflection of society's judgment about the evolution of children's capacities and responsibilities. Almost everywhere, age limits formally regulate children's activities: when they can leave school; when they can marry; when they can vote; when they can be treated as adults by the criminal justice system; when they can join the armed forces; and when they can work. But age limits differ from activity to activity, and from country to country.

¹ Bajpai Asha, *Child Rights in India-Law, Policy and Practice*, OUP, Delhi 2005

² *ibid*

Legal age of the child in Indian Law⁷

Several provisions in the Constitution of India impose on the State the primary responsibility of ensuring that all the needs of children are met and that their basic human rights are fully protected. Article 21 A of the Constitution of India says that the State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children within the ages of 6 and 14 in such manner as the State may by law determine. Article 45 of the Constitution specifies that the State shall endeavor to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of 6. Article 51 (k) lays down a duty that parents or guardians provide opportunities for education to their child/ward between the age of 6 and 14 years.

The age at which a person ceases to be a child varies under different laws in India. Under the Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act, 1986, a child is a person who has not completed 14 years of age. The Constitution of India protects children below the age of 14 from working in factories and hazardous jobs. But below 14, they can work in non-hazardous industries. An area of concern is that no minimum age for child labour has been specified. But for the purposes of criminal responsibility, the age limit is 7 and 12 under the Indian Penal Code, 1860. For purposes of protection against kidnapping, abduction and related offences, it's 16 years for boys and 18 for girls. For special treatment under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000, the age is 18 for both boys and girls. And the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 defines a child as any person below the age of 18, and includes an adopted step- or foster child.

Some provisions relating to age under different laws are :

Age of majority

Under the Age of Majority Act 1875, every person domiciled in India shall attain the age of majority on completion of 18 years and not before. The Indian Majority Act was enacted in order to bring uniformity in the applicability of laws to persons of different religions. Unless a particular personal law specifies otherwise, every person domiciled in India is deemed to have attained majority upon completion of 18 years of age. However, in the case of a minor for whose person or property, or both, a guardian has been appointed or declared by any court of justice before the age of 18 years, and in case of every minor the superintendence of whose property has been assumed by the Court of Wards, age of majority will be 21 years and not 18.

The Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act (HMGA), 1956, in Section 4 (a), define a 'minor' as a person who has not completed the age of 18 years. The age of majority for the purposes of appointment of guardians of person and property of minors, according to the

Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939, is also completion of 18 years. But the age of marriage in Muslim personal law is the age of puberty (around 14 years). Christians and Parsis also reach majority at 18. Under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006, a secular law, “child” means a person who, if a male, has not completed twenty-one years of age, and if a female, has not completed eighteen years of age “child marriage” means a marriage to which either of the contracting parties is a child .

Juvenile justice and claim of juvenility

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000 is a legislation that conforms to the United Nations Minimum Standards for Administration of Justice to Children. It is an Act to consolidate and amend the law relating to juveniles in conflict with the law and children in need of care and protection, by providing for proper care, protection and treatment by catering to their development needs, and by adopting a child-friendly approach in the adjudication and disposition of matters in the best interest of children and for their ultimate rehabilitation through various institutions established under this enactment. Under the 2000 Act, juvenile means a boy or a girl who has not attained the age of 18 years.

“Juvenile in conflict with law” means a juvenile who is alleged to have committed an offence and has not completed his 18th year as on the date of the offence being committed. Whenever a claim of juvenility is raised before any court, or a court is of the opinion that the accused person produced before it was a juvenile on the day the offence was committed, the court shall make an inquiry, take such evidence as may be necessary (but not an affidavit) so as to determine the age of the person, and shall record a finding as to whether or not the person is a juvenile or a child, stating his age as nearly as may be. An important provision is that a claim of juvenility may be raised before any court and it shall be recognized at any stage even after disposal of the case in terms of the provisions. If the court finds a person to be a juvenile on the day the offence was committed, it shall forward the juvenile to the Board. It has been observed that, in many instances, if the police that take a child ‘into custody’ find the child well-built he is considered an ‘adult’ and denied the beneficial provisions of the juvenile justice system.

Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility (MACR)

The legal definition of a child will also affect how the courts deal with offenders, so age is very significant here. A person who is a minor or a child cannot be convicted in the same manner as an adult. Or instance, if a juvenile is accused of an offence under the provisions

of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, he is entitled to necessary benefits under the special enactment of the Juvenile Justice Act.

If there is legislation dealing with the criminal liability of minors, the accused should not be tried under the ordinary law for adults. Children have to be dealt with under the juvenile justice system and not the adult criminal justice system. Children can never be imprisoned or given the death sentence.

Age verification of rescued victims of trafficking

The age of a rescued victim is an important factor in law enforcement and justice delivery. Estimating a child's actual age is of utmost importance for forensic practitioners, particularly when an accused claims to be juvenile before the court. If there is no birth certificate or school leaving certificate then ossification test will have to be done. Court shall also record the forensic findings so that if it is proved that the accused was a juvenile on the day of commission of the offence, the case shall be forwarded to the Juvenile Justice. Anyone under 18 years is a child under the Juvenile Justice Act 2000 and cannot be sent to jail. He has to be looked after in a home and treated according to the provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act.

There are several anomalies relating to the issue of age verification of trafficked minor girls after rescue. The Indian Penal Code, 1860, states that sexual intercourse with a girl-child under 16 years of age, even with her consent, constitutes an offence of rape under Section 375 of the IPC. Under Section 366 (A), procurement of a minor girl below 18 years of age is an offence. Under Section 366 (B), importation of girls less than 21 years of age from the state of Jammu and Kashmir to any other state, or from a foreign country to anywhere in India, is an offence. Under Section 372 and 373 of the IPC, selling/buying of minor girls below 18 years of age for purposes of prostitution, etc, is an offence.

It has been found; however, that traffickers, brothel owners, etc, make sure that the age of the rescued minor is entered as 18 years or above, making her an adult in the records. So, when they are sent to jail, the traffickers/brothel owners bail them out and the victims are returned to their effective confinement.

There is a need to ensure the accountability of doctors who carry out age verification. Also of police officers who record the age immediately after a rescue. Age verification reports usually place the victims within an age bracket. There are countless police records where the age of the girl is recorded as "appears to be of 18-19 years of age". Even medical examinations place the age within a bracket. The Supreme Court has held that when the expert's opinion is given in an age bracket, the lower age in the bracket should be the one taken into consideration, so that the benefit of the doubt favors the victim. Therefore, if the age verification report says that the girl is in the age bracket 17-19 years, for the purposes of law enforcement the age has to be taken as 17 years.

Age of consent for sexual intercourse

In India, the law considers anyone less than 18 years to be a child/minor, not competent to take major decisions affecting herself or others for the purposes of the Indian Majority Act, Contract Act, Juvenile Justice Act, or Representation of Peoples Act. However, under Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code, the girl (aged 16-18) is given the right of consent to sexual intercourse. Yet, she cannot marry at that age even with the consent of her parents. She cannot be taken out of the keeping of her lawful guardian, even with her consent, for lesser purposes. But she can consent to sexual intercourse so long as she does not go out of the keeping of her lawful guardian. The Law Commission of India did attempt, in its 84th report, to bring the age of consent in rape to 18 years, in tune with other enactments and consistent with refined and modern notions regarding the concern and compassion that society should bestow on its younger members. But this was not accepted. As a result, the age of consent in an offence of rape continues to be 16 years even today. Raising the age of consent for sexual intercourse to 18, consistent with the stipulations in subsequent enactments, appears to be the unavoidable imperative before the system.

Child witnesses

The courts have held that evidence from a child witness, if found competent to depose facts, could be the basis for a conviction. In other words, even in the absence of an oath, the evidence of a child witness can be considered under Section 118 of the Evidence Act, provided such a witness is able to understand the answers thereof. The evidence of a child witness and credibility would depend on the circumstances of each case. The only precaution the court should bear in mind whilst assessing the evidence of a child witness is that the witness must be reliable, his/her demeanor must be like that of any other competent witness, and that there is no likelihood of him/her being tutored.

Further, Section 118 of the Indian Evidence Act envisages that all persons shall be competent to testify, unless the court considers that they are prevented from understanding the questions put to them or from giving rational answers to the questions, because of their young age, extreme old age, or disease — whether of mind or any other similar cause. However, a young child can be allowed to testify if he/she has the intellectual capacity to understand questions and provide rational answers.

While the law recognizes the child as a competent witness, a child who is around 6 years old, who is unable to form a proper opinion about the nature of the incident because of immaturity of understanding, is not, considered by the court as a witness whose sole

testimony can be relied on without other corroborative evidence. The evidence of a child must be evaluated carefully because he/she is easy prey to tutoring.

Conclusion-Inconsistencies and Contradictions relating to childhood

There does not appear to be any criteria or scientific parameters for determining childhood. The age limit in some laws appears arbitrary or based on socio-cultural perceptions. Different laws serve different objectives. There are several inconsistencies in Indian law, regarding the definition of childhood and the actual scope of child rights. There is a contradiction between the Right to Education Act (RTE) and the Child labor laws. The implementation of the RTE Act (children between 6-14 years) is not possible without prohibiting child labour in all its forms. How will children who are working and attending school be able to obtain same growth, development and other opportunities of children who do not work? Many children who attend school irregularly eventually drop out of school. Does not child labour even if part time promote this? Without addressing child labour in agriculture which engages most children, how is it possible to eliminate child labour? A review of the definition of 'child', in light of Article 1 of the CRC, has been referred to the Law Commission of India as part of a comprehensive review of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Indian Evidence Act and the Indian Penal Code.

Human rights principles apply to all areas of early childhood development. With regard to children and their rights, these principles are reinforced by the four general principles of the Convention: non-discrimination, [the] best interests of the child, [the] right to life, survival and development, and respect for the views of the child. It is necessary that the definition of 'child' be brought in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child - via all those below 18 years of age. If the best interest of the child is the guiding norm, one can err on the side of a higher age limit for protective care and a lower age limit with respect to civil and cultural matters.

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Other Backward Classes in India : Post Independence Scenario

Angshuman Chakraborty*

In India, a large section of the population is found to be illiterate, ignorant, poor and backward. In the context of social stratification in our country, caste constitutes an important part. Caste is very much linked with the backwardness of the people. The concept of caste is equally helpful in understanding the stratification system of India along with the concept of class as there is a large degree of synchronisation between the two. The Britishers also used the concept of “Backward Classes” to refer to the most “backward castes” of India. M. N. Srinivas has also talked about lower castes including the scheduled castes in the context of “backward classes”. According to him, the term “backward classes movement” must be understood in the Indian context, as, “backward castes movement”(Srinivas,2005).

It is very difficult to get an adequate definition of “backward classes” because the backward classes are a large mixed category of persons with boundaries which are not so clear. They consist of three main categories- ‘the scheduled castes’ (SCs), ‘the scheduled tribes’ (STs) and ‘other backward classes’ (OBCs). The definitions of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are properly given, but ‘other backward classes’ is a ‘residual category’. Their position is highly ambiguous and it is very difficult to provide an accurate statement of their numbers. However, we can generally define ‘backward classes’ as those social groups or classes or castes which are characterised by low literacy and lack of education, poverty, exploitation of labour, non-representation in services and untouchability. Under the category of “backward classes”, some scheduled castes are Chamar, khatick, Regar, Pasi, Dhobi, etc and some other backward classes are Barujibi, Chitrakar, Goala, Jogi, Karmakar, Kumbhakar, etc.

Identification of castes / communities as OBCs and their listings in the OBC lists has had a long history. During the colonial period, after 1806, listings were made on an extensive scale on the basis of administrative reports and assessments. This process accelerated through the census enumerations from 1881 to 1931.

In the Indian Constitution, the term ‘OBCs’ has not been defined properly and the debates of the Constituent Assembly had reflected only the fact that the ‘OBCs’ were a group which required special treatment because in the social hierarchy it was a stratum higher than the SCs. Besides that the Constituent Assembly argued that these ‘OBCs’ were to be locally designated. It implies that difficulties were realized of prescribing universally

acceptable tests of backwardness given the diverse local socio-economic-cultural conditions in different parts of the country.

Immediately after the Constitution of India came into force, several states started making their OBC lists and provided several benefits. They also extended such lists from time to time and included many more communities. The Government of India compiled its own lists of the OBCs which were quite similar to those compiled by the respective state governments. At this moment, two judgements of the Supreme Court (State of Madras vs Champkam Dorairajan and Venkataramana vs. State of Madras) in 1951 dramatically changed the situation and facilitated the way for the introduction of Article 15(4) in the Constitution through a Constitutional Amendment and usage of the term “Socially and Educationally Backward Classes” (SEBCs) in it. This propelled the debate to adequately identify these SEBCs and define the criteria of their identification.

According to the Report of the Backward Classes Commission (1956), ‘Other Backward Classes’ consist of the following communities:

- (i) Those nomads who have no occupation of a fixed habitation and are given to mimicry, begging, jugglery, dancing, etc;
- (ii) Communities consisting largely of tenants without occupancy rights and those with insecure land tenure;
- (iii) Communities consisting largely of agricultural or landless labourers;
- iv) Communities engaged in cattle breeding, sheep breeding or fishing on small scale;
- v) Communities consisting of a large percentage of small landowners with uneconomic holdings;
- vi) Communities, the majority of whose people do not have sufficient education and therefore have not secured adequate representation in Government services;
- vii) Communities not occupying positions in social hierarchy;
- viii) Artisan and occupational classes without security of employment and whose traditional occupations have ceased to be remunerative; and
- ix) Social groups from among Muslims, Christians and Sikhs who are still backward socially and educationally.

Under Article 340 of the Indian Constitution, it is obligatory for the government to promote the welfare of the OBCs. Article 340(1) states, “The President may by order appoint a commission, consisting of such persons as he thinks fit, to investigate the

conditions of socially and educationally backward classes within the territory of India and the difficulties under which they labour and to make recommendations as to the steps that should be taken by the union or any state to remove such difficulties and as to improve 'their' condition and as to the grants that should be made, and the order appointing such commission shall define the procedure to be followed by the commission".

Article 340(2) states, "A commission so appointed shall investigate the matters referred to them and present to the President a report setting out the facts as found by them and making such recommendations as they think proper."

On January 29, 1953 under the chairmanship of Kaka Kalelkar, the First Backward Classes Commission was set up by a Presidential order and this Commission submitted its report on March 30, 1955. The Commission made a list of 2399 backward castes for the entire country of which 837 had been classified as the 'most backward'. The criteria on the basis of which the Kalelkar Commission listed communities as OBCs were as mentioned below:-

- a) the social position that a community occupies in the caste hierarchy;
- b) the percentage of literacy and its general educational advancement;
- c) its representation in government service or in the industrial sphere; and
- d) trends in its economic advancement during the past one or two decades.

In its final report this Commission recommended 'caste as the criteria' to determine backwardness. But, this report was not unanimous. Controversies had developed among the members of the Commission and the Chairman, Kaka Kalelkar himself rejected this report arguing that the criteria of backwardness should be determined on principles other than caste. Further he stated that only individuals and families should be the units whose backwardness is ascertained. Different backward castes put pressure on the Central Government to accept the recommendations of Kaka Kalelkar Commission but in 1961 the Central Government decided not to accept the recommendations made by the said commission. This view was supported by the Supreme Court. In 1963, the Supreme Court (in M.R.Balaji case) gave the verdict that economic backwardness or poverty should be the main criterion of social backwardness. Other factors such as, caste status, type of occupation or occupational status, etc, should also be considered. Beside that, a historical judgement was given by the Supreme Court that reservation could not exceed 50%.

By the early 1960s, according to Ghanshyam Shah, the Congress, the ruling party did not ignore the clout of some of the backward castes in north and south

India(Shah,2005:404). In the Hindi – speaking belt, the Socialist Party mobilised OBCs. In 1967, the monopoly of the Congress was severely challenged and they lost power in several north Indian states. During this period, the Naxalite movement was at its peak and the land grab movement had mobilised the backward castes against exploitation. In 1969, the Congress party took a strategy to win over the OBCs. In the early 1970s, Socially and Educationally Backward Class (SEBC) commissions were appointed by several state governments to assess the conditions of the various groups and report which sections of society should be treated as OBCs. On the basis of the reports, certain castes were identified as OBCs and granted reservations in educational institutions and government jobs.

In 1980, the Government of West Bengal set up a committee for the identification of the OBCs, but this committee did not argue in favour of reservation in government jobs and opined that poverty and low levels of standard of living rather than caste should be the important criterion for identifying backwardness and the state government accepted its report in its entirety. State governments of Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh have identified caste as one of the criteria of backwardness. Delhi, Dadra and Nagar Haveli as well as Himachal Pradesh have not accepted caste as a criterion. Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan, etc. have identified low economic status as one of the significant tests. Most of the reports of different state level commissions have been proclaimed to be faulty by the judiciary and, in a few cases, reports accepted by the judiciary have not been implemented.

At the national level, the Second Backward Classes Commission, under the chairmanship of B. P. Mandal, was appointed by the Janata government in 1978 and this commission (popularly known as Mandal Commission) submitted a report in December, 1980. It used social, educational and economic indicators for identifying the backwardness of a caste.

The indicators, given by the Mandal Commission, are mentioned below :-

Social :

- (a) Castes / classes considered as socially backward by others.
- (b) Castes / classes that mainly depend on manual labour for their livelihood.
- (c) Castes / classes where at least 25 % females and 10 % males above the state average get married at an age below 17 years in rural areas and at least 10 % females and 5% males do so in urban areas.

- (d) Castes / classes where participation of females in work is at least 25 % above the state average.

Educational:

- (e) Castes / classes where the number of children in the age – group 5 – 15 years who never attended school is at least 25% above the state average.
- (f) Caste / classes where the rates of student dropout in the age group 5 – 15 years is at least 25 % above the state average .
- (g) Caste / classes amongst whom proportion of matriculates is at least 25 % below the state average.

Economic:

- (h) Castes / classes where the average value of family assets is at least 25 % below the state average.
- (i) Caste / classes where the number of families living in kutcha houses is at least 25% above the state average.
- (j) Castes / classes where the number of household having taken consumption loan is at least 25% above the state average.

Separate weightage had been given to each indicator: 3 points each to social, 2 points each to educational and 1 point each to economic indicators thus yielding a total score of 22. Those castes getting a score of 11 were deemed as backward and the rest were treated as advanced. This Commission identified 3743 backward castes as OBCs. The number of OBCs had been increased substantially due to strong caste mobilization. The report of the Commission was placed before Parliament only in April 1982 when members of the backward classes of parliament protested against the delay and held a ‘dharna’ outside Parliament house. The Congress government neither took any decision regarding the report of the commission nor rejected the report. But for the anti-reservationists in Gujarat in 1985, the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi promised to develop a national consensus in the issue. In Ghanshyam Shah’s opinion, no effort was, however, made in that direction either (Shah, 2005:405).

V. P. Singh, the Prime Minister of Janata government announced on 7th August, 1990 that his government had decided to implement the ‘first phase’ of the recommendations of the commission. In this phase, 27% jobs were to be reserved for the OBCs in all central government departments and offices and public sector undertakings, including banks and financial institutions run by the government. But due to the rapid development of anti-

reservation agitation in educational institutions because of the blockage of opportunities for general caste candidates, the government declared that the recommendations of the report would not be effective in the educational sphere. The recommendations would not be effective also in services related to science, technology, space, atomic energy, military etc. Further, some arguments are made for anti-reservation campaign. One argument is that reservations should have been discontinued ten years from the coming into force of the Constitution. By extending the term every decade, we are going against the wishes of the Constitution-makers. It is in fact not recognizing merit and depriving the more qualified. Second argument is that the idea of reservation has been adopted in order to improve the lot of the weaker sections. If however, the reservations have really made no difference in their conditions so far, then their utility is in question. Another argument is that this policy is being bartered for vote. No objections will be there if the reservations are provided under the very concept of the equality of opportunity.

Janata government at the Centre declared that in the states which had their own OBC list, the state list would prevail if it was different from that of the Mandal Commission. The Chandra Shekhar Government, according to Ghanshyam Shah, was not against the recommendation of Mandal Commission, but it had no courage to complete the task left unfinished by V. P. Singh (Shah, 2005:407). Narasimha Rao's Congress government in September 1991 issued a notification stating that within 27% of the union government's civilian jobs reserved for SEBCs, preference would be given to 'poorer sections' of such classes. Further, 10% jobs would be reserved for other economically backward sections of the people who were not covered by any of the existing schemes of reservations.

In November 1992, the Supreme Court of India, in one of its judgements accepted job reservation formula and upheld the decision to reserve 27% government jobs for the backward castes but rejected the Narasimha Rao government's decision to reserve 10% vacancies for other economically backward sections.

The Supreme Court of India gave also the verdict that if caste was accepted as the basis for identifying the beneficiaries of reservations, creamy layer¹ was to be excluded from reservations. No reservation was given in the context of promotion, certain technical posts

1. In Indian politics, the term 'creamy layer' is used to refer to the relatively wealthier and better educated members of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) who are not eligible for Government sponsored educational and professional benefit programs. In 1971 the Sattanathan Commission introduced this term that indicated that the "creamy layer" should be excluded from the reservations of civil posts and services granted to the OBCs

were exempted from reservation and permanent commission was to be set up by the central as well as state governments to examine complaints of over- inclusion and under inclusion and requests for inclusion in the list of backward castes.

On 29th March, 2007, the Supreme Court of India, as an interim measure, stayed the law providing for 27% reservation for OBCs in educational institutions like IITs and IIMs. On 10th April, 2008 the Supreme Court of India upheld the govt's initiative of 27% OBC quotas in govt. funded institutions. The court has categorically reiterated its prior stand that those considered part of the "Creamy layer" [those with family income above Rs.2,50,000 a year (now Rs.4,50,000 a year)] should be excluded from the scope of the reservation policy as well as from private institutions. The verdict produced mixed reactions from supporting and opposing quarters.

Following the directives of the Supreme Court, Commissions for Backward Classes were constituted both at the national and state levels. Under this process, the West Bengal Commission for Backward Classes has been set up by the Act of the State Legislature – "West Bengal Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993 (West Bengal Act I of 1993)". In terms of the provisions contained in section 3 of the Act, the State Government has constituted this Body to be known as "The West Bengal Commission for Backward classes" to exercise the powers conferred on and to perform the functions assigned to the commission under the Act. The main function of the commission is to examine requests for inclusion of any class of citizens as a backward class in the lists and hear complaints of over- inclusion or under- inclusion of any backward class in such lists and tender such advice to the State Government as it deems appropriate. The recommendations of the commission and its advice will be forwarded by the commission to the State Government and the advice of the commission shall ordinarily be binding on the State Government.

Backwardness of any individual or some individuals may not represent the class as a whole and the class cannot under such circumstances be considered to be a backward class. It is the backwardness of the class which has to be considered and taken into account in deciding the matter. There are many factors which may lead to social and educational backwardness of any class of citizens. They are caste, kind of occupation, economic condition, the average literacy of a class of citizens, the educational standard on an average of the citizens in the particular class, the drop outs of students from school in that class, the number of persons in the class employed in Govt., Semi-Govt and Public Undertakings and the number of persons in the class occupying any high and important public office, social customs, living conditions, employment of child – labour, status of women, early

marriage, taking the children away from school for being engaged in field, house-hold labour of any particular class etc.

The West Bengal Commission for Backward classes has already identified 108 communities from all religious communities as OBCs till 24th September, 2010. Out of these, 53 are Muslim communities, 45 are from Hindu communities, 9 are from Buddhist and another one from Jain community .

The OBC Communities in West Bengal placed their demands for identification of OBC to the West Bengal Commission for Backward Classes through the mobilization of their different caste associations from time to time.

Beside that, West Bengal government recently has increased reservation in the OBC category from 7% to 17% by introducing a 'more backward' classification to benefit the Muslim Communities. 56 out of total 108 communities have been regarded as the 'more backward' classes. The more backward classes comprise 49 Muslims, 6 Hindu and one Buddhist communities. The backward group will enjoy 7% reservation, while the more backward group will enjoy 10% reservation.

The main problem lies in the fact that most of the OBC communities in India are themselves strangers to one another. The differences that exist among them are such that they do not have any common awareness regarding their own problems and hence uniformity in opinions about the problems is rarely formed. Conflicts arise among themselves regarding the very issue of "backwardness". Some of the lower castes, who have concentrated their attention on the attractive benefits of reservation, are building up 'lobbies' to bring pressure on the Government and also on the "Permanent Backward Classes Commission" to include their castes into the official list of the OBCs. The political parties such as "Rastreeya Janata Dal" under the leadership of Shri Laloo Prasad Yadav in Bihar, and "Samajwadi Party" under the leadership of Mulayam Singh Yadav in Uttar Pradesh are trying to consolidate the strength of OBCs. Political parties because of their "vote- bank" of the backward castes are also organizing resistance against any attempt to withdraw the reservation facilities to those members and families of the backward castes who have been economically better off over the years.

In the context of the politics of reservations, Ghanshyam Shah has talked about different backward caste movements in South India, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar(Shah,2004:137-143). The movements in these states were led by the landed peasantry of the backward castes. Due to the improvement in their economic condition, they aspired for a higher status in the caste hierarchy. In the political sphere, according to Shah, the backward caste elite fought for the positions in parties, state assemblies, the cabinet and public institutions, and side

by side, they pressed for reservation in educational institutions and jobs in different government sectors. Beside these, the backward castes also organized separate struggles for sanskritization and political positions on caste lines. The upper strata of the backward castes mobilized the lower backward castes for enlarged support in the political sphere. So, reservation has paved the way for some members of the backward castes to enter the middle class and share power and positions with the upper castes. With the facility of reservation, according to Shah, upward mobility for a backward caste person is relatively easy and if he moves up and becomes a member of the middle class, his social backwardness, though not eradicated, is reduced.

Reservation policy is likely to satisfy and uplift all those weaker sections of the society which were discontented and had suffered injustice and insults for decades. This facility can create a new awareness, self confidence, courageousness, adventurous spirit and self respect among the backward castes / classes. But reservation facility has created some negative impact in the area of caste politics. It is stated that as long as this facility continues so long, caste politics, caste rivalry, caste consciousness, caste hatred and caste conflict will continue. One of the most widely criticized aspects of reservation policy is that it affects very badly the merit. It stands in the way of fundamental rights and equality of opportunities. Poverty and economic criteria should be the basis of reservation. Beside that, an attitude prevails into the minds of the backward classes population that they could progress in life by the benefits of reservation. This kind of attitude is detrimental to progress, growth and social development of any country. If the benefits of reservation will be spread more evenly and widely within the targeted growth, then this will also help to reduce opposition for the reservation by the forward castes. In the context of nation building, all sections of the society should play an equally important role. The purpose of reservation is to provide an opportunity for those sections of the society which have been neglected so far, to play their role in this collective process.

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Re-reading of Rabindranath's Gora: Friendship & Dialectics

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Introduction :

*"Today I have become what I earlier strove day and night to become, but without success. Today I have become an Indian—Bharatvarsha. In me there is no hostility towards any community, Hindu, Muslim or Christian. Today, I belong to every community of this Bharatvarsha..."*¹ is the ultimate realization that strikes *Gora*, the central character of Tagore's novel by the same name.

Gora is the largest and the most intricate of the novels written by Rabindranath Tagore. Undoubtedly a classic, this classic debates a number of issues and concerns that seem contemporary even today and easily applicable to the current scenario of our country. This novel is a reflection and analysis of the multifarious social life in colonial India. It is about variations in one's own beliefs as a result of changing times, society and its manifold influences on the people, their thinking, ideologies and philosophies, and in the process, an overall transformation seen and sensed within an individual and the society in general. It also portrays the transformation of personal and social relationships. As the story unfolds the relationship between Gora and Binoy that undergoes many trials and tribulations although at the end it is friendship that is exultant.

Friendship is the focal theme of various novels and short stories written by Tagore. The novels and stories which depict friendship relationships of the central characters can be divided into two broad categories:

i) Friendship relationships which develop between two people who are not of the same age and who are not totally dependent on each other for emotional support. That is, they have other social and personal relations on which they can depend at the time of crisis.

ii) The other category is one where friendship develops between two individuals who are of same age and are totally dependent on each other for emotional support. We can place the friendship relationship of Raja Chittaranjan and Bipinkishore of 'Sadar O Andar', Nikhlesh and Sandip of 'Ghare Baire', Mahendra and Bihari of 'Chokher Bali' and

¹ Tagore, Rabindranath (2009). *Gora*, New Delhi, Penguin. Tr. Radha Mukherjee. Originally published in Bengali in 1910.

Sachis and Sribilas of Chaturanga. Friendship of Khemankar and Supriya in 'Malini' and Gora and Vinay in 'Gora' falls under?/ in the second category. Though these novels and short stories revolve around diverse themes and plots, they all share a unique characteristic. A careful reading of these stories reveals that in each of these novels the friendship relationship is threatened by romantic relationships that the protagonists develop in the course of the event. And ultimately the friendship relationships are sacrificed at the altar of romance. But 'Gora' stands out as an exception to this, here, the friendship relationship of Gora and Binoy is tested time and again against their romantic relation, values and ideals that they cherish — which clash with each other and often stands in the way of their friendship, nevertheless at the end grounds are prepared for their reunion. In stark contrast to other stories the friendship relationship is not subjugated to the romantic relationships that both Binoy and Gora develop.

Gora- The Novel

'Gora' was first published in two volumes in February 1910. Gora is a story set in the disruptive times (late 19th Century to early 20th Century) when the Bengali society in *Kolikata* (Calcutta) was starkly divided into the traditional orthodox Hindus and the modernized liberal thinking of the *Bramhas*— indoctrinated by the Bramho Samaj¹. The Hindus unflinchingly followed and took pride in their renaissance practices and ceremonials while the *Bramhas* were in constant clashes with orthodoxy and vehemently opposed all idol-worship, caste system, child marriage etc. Yet both communities were not devoid of their own hypocrisies, contradictions and flaws. These were also the times when the English education had become more acceptable across the society and the intellectual awareness amongst the youth was at rise. Pitted against such a social background are numerous characters each of which is unique and strongly individualistic. In fact, it's through these various characters and their stories that Tagore looms upon almost every single concern of the society mainly the religious narrow-mindedness. Hence the novel is woven with several sub-plots, intermediary stories and events which, though sometime seem to meander away from the main theme, add on to the beauty of the story.

¹ The phrase *Brahmo Samaj* literally means the society of the worshippers of the One True God. *Brahmo* means one who worships Brahma, the Supreme Spirit of the universe and *Samaj* means a community of men. The Brahmo Samaj, therefore represents a body of men who want to establish the worship of the Supreme Being in spirit as opposed to the prevailing idolatry of the land. The movement was started by Raja Rammohun Roy and his friends by opening a place for public worship on the Chitpore Road in Calcutta, and was duly and publicly inaugurated in January 1830 by the consecration of the first house of prayer, now known as the Adi Brahmo Samaj.

Gora, the protagonist, is a strong advocate of Hinduism and practices his religion with high regards, thorough conviction and strict austerity. He is a natural leader with exemplary oratory skills, fair and tall stature and a resonating voice. However, his forthrightness and impelling attitude make him seem an arrogant, self-asserting, violent person who thrusts his opinion unto others. But Gora at heart is an eternal optimistic dreaming about his ideal Bharatvarsha, a prosperous and happy India, which according to him is achieved by uniting all classes under the umbrella of Hinduism. As a person he is highly patriotic and sympathetic- cannot stand injustice and high-society atrocities over poor and downtrodden. Gora is a character with denial for his newly developed feelings for Sucharita and the slow dawning of role of women in his dream country Bharatvarsha, his scar when he learns about Binoy's inclination towards Brahmas, his stun upon knowing the facts relating to his birth, then his aversion to religion/caste system and his final repentance for forsaking his mother's feelings in his pursuit have all been beautifully brought forth. Whereas Binoy, Gora's best friend is a soft spoken, easily convincible and empathetic gentleman, who is initially portrayed as a mere shadow of Gora but, in subsequent development, emerges as more genuine and self-analyzing human being. He appears to be a golden-hearted person with high conscience, who cannot intentionally hurt anyone or refuse anything and is in constant dilemma about right and wrongs.

The story takes a turn when these two Hindu boys come in contact with 'Poresh Babu', a mature and high thinking gentleman, and his family who represent the other facet of society, the Brahmas. They had adopted liberal values and lifestyle where even the ladies of the household have equal prominence. Sucharita and Lolita are the heroines who are educated and have their own points of view in life. There are many other interesting characters like Anandamoyi, Baradasundari, Haran babu, Krishnadayal and Harimohini. Each of these characters contributes in its own way to the events that unfurl in the novel. The novel depicts the events in the life of its characters for a span of seven months (from the month of Sharavana to month of Magha¹).

Friendship: East and West

Friendship essentially involves a distinctive kind of concern for your friend, a concern which might reasonably be understood as a kind of love. Philosophers from the ancient Greeks on have traditionally distinguished three notions that can properly be called love:

¹ From the 4th month to the 10th month of Bengali Calendar.

agape, *eros*, and *philia*. *Agape* is a kind of love that does not respond to the antecedent value of its object but instead is thought to *create* value in the beloved; it has come through the Christian tradition to mean the sort of love God has for us persons as well as, by extension, our love for God and our love for humankind in general. By contrast, *eros* and *philia* are generally understood to be responsive to the merits of their objects—to the beloved's properties, especially his goodness or beauty. The difference is that *eros* is a kind of passionate desire for an object, typically sexual in nature, whereas '*philia*' originally meant a kind of affectionate regard or friendly feeling towards not just one's friends but also possibly towards family members, business partners, and one's country at large (Liddell et al., 1940; Cooper, 1977). Given this classification of kinds of love, *philia* seems to be that which is most clearly relevant to friendship.

For this reason, love and friendship often get lumped together as a single topic; nonetheless, there are significant differences between them. As understood here, love is an *evaluative attitude* directed at particular persons as such, an attitude which we might take towards someone whether or not that love is reciprocated and whether or not we have an established relationship with him. Friendship, by contrast, is essentially a kind of *relationship* grounded in a particular kind of special concern each has for the other as the person he is; and whereas we must make conceptual room for the idea of unrequited love, unrequited friendship is senseless. Consequently, accounts of friendship tend to understand it not merely as a case of reciprocal love of some form (together with mutual acknowledgment of this love), but as essentially involving significant interactions between the friends—as being in this sense a certain kind of relationship.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle provides us with one of the great discussions of friendship. He distinguishes between what he believes to be genuine friendships and two other forms: one based on mutual usefulness, the other on pleasure. These two forms only last for as long as there is utility and pleasure involved, whereas genuine friendship does not dissolve. It takes place between good men: "each alike wish good for the other *qua* good, and they are good in themselves". Aristotle continues, "And it is those who desire the good of their friends for the friends' sake that are most truly friends, because each loves the other for what he is, and not for any incidental quality" (Aristotle 1976). This also entails appropriate self-concern.

Arguably, the other major classical treatment of friendship was Cicero's *Laelius de Amicitia*. Cicero (106-43 BC) was a Roman statesman and orator whose writings on ethics, the philosophy of religion and natural law has been influential. His belief in the notion of human rights and the brotherhood of man became important reference points. As with Aristotle, Cicero believed that true friendship was only possible between good men. This

friendship, based on virtue, does offer material benefits, but it does not seek them. All human beings, Cicero concluded, are bonded together, along with the gods, in a community of shared reason. But in the real world, friendship is subject to all sorts of pressures.

But other social thinkers and theorists, while commenting on transformations of personal relationships in general and friendship in particular in modern era, were not so optimistic. Ferdinand Tönnies (1957) saw friendship (along with kinship and community) as one of the three pillars of traditional society that were disrupted by the impersonal forms of society associated with industrialization, urbanization and capitalism.¹ German sociologist Georg Simmel (1950) asserted that modernity is inevitably destructive of friendship. He argued that all the differentiating forces of modern life split us up into specialized roles so that our distinctive cluster of roles is too uniquely individualized to be able to relate in a holistic way to another single person. The modern way of feeling, he suggested, produces differentiated friendships, implying that we would have separate friends for particular interests and activities. We would lunch with one, play sport with another and complain about our partner to another. For Simmel, the modern style of friendship would be based on reserve and discretion as modern people have too much to hide.²

The discussion of friendship in Indian philosophical tradition is very scant and rare. But this is not to say that the Indians did not possess the concept of friendship or recognize it in their literature, or regard it as an important social relationship. Sanskrit, the language of the Indian philosophical texts possesses numerous words for friends.³ The words 'Bandhu'

¹ Tönnies, Ferdinand (1957): *Community and Society*, Michigan, Michigan State University Press (Originally published in German in 1887 under the title *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*). *Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft* (lit. *community and society*) are sociological categories introduced by Tönnies for two normal types of human association. (A normal type, as coined by Tönnies, is a purely conceptual tool to be built up logically, whereas an ideal type, as coined by Max Weber, is a concept formed by accentuating main elements of a historic/social change.)

² Simmel, Georg (1950): *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, Ed. By Kurt H Wolff, Free Press. Simmel is best known in contemporary sociology for his contributions to our understanding of patterns or forms of social interaction. Simmel made clear that one of his primary interests was association among conscious actors and that his intent was to look at a wide range of interactions that may seem trivial at some times but crucially important at others. Simmel states that friendship is not based on total intimacy, but rather involves limited intimacy based on common intellectual pursuits, religion, and shared experiences. Marriage is the least secretive form of relationship

³ Such as Sakha, Mitra, Hitkari, Anuragi..

and ‘Sakha’ (both synonyms for friend) can be found in Rig Veda¹. The word ‘sakha’ has been used repeatedly in the famous Gnan Sukta² of Rig Veda. Dan Sukta of Rig Veda tells us one who enjoys the pleasures of life without sharing with his friend(s) is not a friend at all (Chakrabarty, 2008). There are some discussions on friendship in Yajur Veda³ too. There are also references to friendship in Indian Literature. Manusmriti or Manavadharmashastra (the Laws of Manu), an ancient Indian text on social, religious and moral duties, forbids betraying or killing of a friend and imposes severe sanctions in the event of transgression. These glimpses into friendship in Indian literature, however, are insufficient to build an account of the nature of friendship in the philosophical tradition of India.

Gora & Binoy: friendship & its dialectics

The dialectics of freedom to be dependent vs. the freedom to be independent⁴ is frequently confronted by friends in a dyadic relationship. The freedom to be independent entails the liberty to pursue one’s interests without any interference from the friend. The freedom to be dependent is the privilege to depend on one’s friends at the time of crisis.

¹ The *Rigveda* (a compound of *re* “praise, verse” and *veda* “knowledge”) is an ancient Indian sacred collection of Vedic Sanskrit hymns. It is counted among the four canonical sacred texts (*śruti*) of Hinduism known as the Vedas. Some of its verses are still recited as Hindu prayers, at religious functions and other occasions, putting these among the world’s oldest religious texts in continued use. The Rigveda contains several mythological and poetical accounts of the origin of the world, hymns praising the gods, and ancient prayers for life, prosperity, etc. It is one of the oldest extant texts in any Indo-European language. Philological and linguistic evidence indicate that the Rigveda was composed in the north-western region of the Indian subcontinent, roughly between 1700–1100 BC (the early Vedic period).

² The text is organized in 10 books, known as Mandalas, of varying age and length. Each mandala consists of hymns called *sukta* (*su-ukta*, literally, “well recited, eulogy”) intended for various sacrificial rituals.

³ The *Yajurveda* (*yajurveda*, a *tatpurusha* compound of *yajus* “sacrificial formula”, + *veda* “knowledge”) is the third of the four canonical texts of Hinduism, the Vedas. By some, it is estimated to have been composed between 1,400 and 1000 BC, the Yajurveda ‘Samhita’, or ‘compilation’, contains the mantras needed to perform the sacrifices of the religion of the Vedic period, and the added Brahmana and Shrautasutra add information on the interpretation and on the details of their performance.

⁴ William K. Rawlins (1992) identifies two general classes of dialectics that occur in friendships: (i) contextual dialectics and (ii) interactional dialectics. Rawlins argues that any friendship has to confront two contextual dialectics viz the dialectic of ideal vs. real and the dialectic of private vs. public. Rawlins identifies four interactional dialectics namely the dialectic of freedom to be dependent vs. freedom to be independent; the dialectic of affection vs. instrumentality; the dialectic of judgment vs. acceptance; and the dialectic of expressiveness vs. protectiveness.

The relationship of Gora and Binoy is constantly fraught with this dialectic. Gora and Binoy were of same age. They had studied together. They used to hold same choices and opinions. But when Binoy came into contact with *Brahma* Poreshbabu and his family, his views and values changed. He enjoyed their company and developed a romantic relationship with Lolita (one of the daughters of Poreshbabu). Gora was a staunch Hindu and was not happy with this development. “No, Binoy, that won’t do!” cried Gora... ‘I see clearly that you are weakening...I can give it to you in writing that the day you go there, you will start dining at their house’...Binoy began to think: ‘For civility’s sake, I must visit Poreshbabu’s house.’ But he seemed to hear Gora’s voice warn him on their own group’s version of Bharatvarsha...At every step, Binoy had followed many restrictions imposed by their group’s image of Bharatvarsha. He had often hesitated, but obeyed all the same. Today, his heart rose in rebellion.”¹

Gora’s objection to Binoy’s eating at Anandamoyi’s room also reflects the dialectic of freedom and dependence. Binoy used to visit Gora’s house often and used to eat at Anandamoyi’s. On one such day Anandamoyi asked Binoy to come to her room and to have something. “So Binu, come along to my room. I have arranged some refreshments for you.” But Gora Objected to this. “No, Ma, that’s not allowed! Gora intervened...I shan’t let Binoy eat at your room.” Then a long argument broke out between Anandamoyi and Gora. Though Binoy was a mute spectator to this, he was feeling miserable which is evident from Anandamoyi’s words, “Binoy, don’t look so miserable, baap. You have a soft heart and feel I must be hurt, but it’s nothing really, baap.”² It shows that Binoy was not in agreement with Gora he had to surrender to his will. But a few days later Binoy returned to Gora’s house taking advantage of Gora’s absence and had his lunch at Anandamoyi’s. “Binoy rushed to Anandamoyi’s chamber in the private antahpur of Gora’s house. Anandamoyi was at her meal...Binoy sat down facing her. ‘Ma, I am very hungry’, he said. ‘Please give me something to eat.’” When Anadomoyi pointed out that the Brahman cook had left, Binoy said, ‘As if I have come to taste Bamun-thakur’s cooking...I want Prasad from your own platter—food sanctified by your touch, Ma.’³

¹ Tagore, Rabindranath (2009). *Gora*, New Delhi, Penguin. Tr. RadhaMukherjee. Pp 9-10, 37

² Ibid. Pp 14-17.

³ Ibid. Pg 38.

The dialectic of acceptance vs. judgment which proposes that we expect our friends to accept us with all our shortcomings but at the same time we expect them to judge our actions and rectify them is also confronted by these two friends. The crisis arises when there is ambiguity about the measures adopted for evaluation.

Binoy's increasing intimacy with Poreshbabu and his family miffed Gora and detachment between the two friends grew. Binoy and Lolita were about to tie their knot. However, since, it was an intercommunity marriage (between a Hindu boy and a *Brahma* girl) Poreshbabu and Binoy were shunned by their respective communities. Binoy expected Gora to attend his marriage ceremony since friendship ties are above such narrow considerations of caste, creed and colour. But Gora expressed his inability to be a part of that ceremony. On the day of their marriage Binoy came to Gora and said "You may not attend, I know, but on this day, I cannot proceed with this undertaking without asking you once... So it is decided that you will not be able to attend my wedding celebrations?" 'No Binoy, I can't attend.'... Binoy remained silent..."¹

The same event depicts the dialectic of ideal vs. real. This dialectic states that in every society there is an ideal-typical construct of friendship relationship and there is a conflict between this ideal version and the practice of friendship in real, everyday world. Poreshbabu thought that though Binoy and Lolita have been shunned by their respective communities, Gora would stand by them. He went to Gora, "...on Binoy's side there is perhaps nobody but you. That is why I have come to consult you." But Gora refused to be a part of this ceremony. "What use consulting me on this? I have nothing to do with it." Poreshbabu stared at Gora in surprise. 'You have nothing to do with it?' he repeated, after a while... 'I know you are his friend,' persisted Poreshbabu. 'At such a time doesn't he need his friends most of all?'"² Here Poreshbabu is echoing the ideal conceptions of friend. It is believed that a person stands by his friend in adverse situations and friendship is above caste, creed and religion. But in reality, Gora puts his religion or 'swadharma' above friendship.

Conclusions :

The friendship relationships depicted by Rabindranath Tagore in his literary works demonstrate that

- i. Friendship relationships are characterized by the superordination of the one over the other.

¹ Ibid. Pg 468.

² Ibid. Pp 435-438.

- ii. That the one who is more dependent on his friend for emotional support is more subordinate to the other (who is not dependent on his friend alone for emotional support).
- iii. One who is in super ordinate position acts like a hero and the one who is subordinate and dependent on his friend displays the characteristic of a heroine. Every man in his unconscious has an anima¹ which is overtly expressed in the behavior of this subordinated friend (Ghosh, 2009).

The character Binoy is clearly the subordinate in this novel hence Gora decided everything for Binoy. Binoy was also very willing to follow Gora's footsteps, but with the passage of time a sense of self and individuality emerged within Binoy. Binoy's a motherless child, migrated to Calcutta at a very early age to find love and compassion in Gora's mother Anandamoyi. When Gora decreed that Binoy could not accept food from Anandamoyi because of she was flouting the ritual purity, Binoy could not accept. He overtly went against Gora's order and accepted food from Anadamoyi and water from Lachmia (Anandomoyi's maid, who was from an impure caste). Later, Binoy refused to accept Gora's assessment of Poreshbabu and Brahmo Samaj. Neither could he find any reason in Gora's emphasis on maintaining a ritual purity. The dialectics were negotiated again and again. Ultimately, Binoy developed a strong personal identity. At the end, the conditions were ripe for the reunion of these two friends

Parallel to the personal tension between Gora and Binoy, runs the societal tension between Hindus and Brahmas of the then Bengali society throughout the text. Here, we can see how the societal contexts affect the development and transformations of personal relationships. Despite being a matter of personal choice, our social contexts force us to choose or reject certain individuals from the gamut of our social or personal relationships. These conflicts of values were unique to the historical context in which the novel is set. Thus it is evident that the societal level which is most removed from the individual frames the patterns of friendship in a number of important ways.

¹ The **anima** and **animus**, in Carl Jung's school of analytical psychology, are the two primary anthropomorphic archetypes of the unconscious mind, as opposed to both the theriomorphic and inferior-function of the shadow archetypes, as well as the abstract symbol sets that formulate the archetype of the Self. The anima and animus are described by Jung as elements of his theory of the collective unconscious, a domain of the unconscious that transcends the personal psyche. In the unconscious of the male, it finds expression as a feminine inner personality: **anima**; equivalently, in the unconscious of the female it is expressed as a masculine inner personality: **animus**.

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The Shiva's gajan of Sonapalashi.....A sociological study of rituals of a small hamlet in Burdwan.

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Folk culture and tradition has a long history in Indian society. The term “folk culture” implies that the “folk” should be looked upon as a socially differentiated mass of the working classes and strata that stands in a very effective complementary relationship to various social formations and their special conditions. “Folk” is thus made up of the peasant strata, artisans, land-poor or landless plebeian groupings, proletarian strata, workers, and petite bourgeois, among others. By “complementary relationship” is understood a processually determined, many-sided network of connections between those in power and specific lower strata, but also among the latter. That network of connections is very much like a net that not only proves effectual as a common field for carrying out class struggles, but is also characterized by all kinds of innovations and their acceptance, implementation, or rejection. Their resiliency, i.e., ability to continue, to function or to adapt intellectually to changes in traditions, in the areas of material, spiritual, and social culture, etc., helps constitute an everyday life that is ever changing. The way in which the suggested process of change and constancy, of new and old, in shorter or larger time spans of specific periods, takes place in general or socio-specifically, and just how it has been concretely manifested in various expressive forms, is what we call “culture” in the broadest sense of the term (Jacobeit: 1991:68). Herein lies the significance of folk culture. The overall manifestation relates to the working classes and strata, i.e., the lower social strata within the network of connections described, which then would be logically described simply as folk culture. (Bausinger: 1987: 137). It is in pursuit of delving inside the rich and to some extent pristine folk culture of Bengal, that we thought of conducting this study of Shiva's Gajan.

This study was done in Sonapalashi, a middle-sized village on the Gangetic delta area in that part of eastern India that comprises of West Bengal with Calcutta, as it's metropolitan city. Sonapalashi is the village under Dist. & P.S- Burdwan. It is situated by the side of Burdwan-Nabadwip road, about 15 km far from Bardhaman town. The village is divided into two main wards – the Uttar Para (North-side) and the Dakshinpara (South-side). The Uttar Para is resided by high castes while the lower casts reside mostly in Dakshinpara. Apart from this regional division, there are several castes – wise Paras such as the Banerjee Para, Mashai Para, Kotal Para, Chunuri Para, Hari Para etc. The village has innumerable Shiva temples because old Shiva is the guardian deity of the village.

Our special area of interest has been the rituals of Sonapalashi. **Ritual** is a set of actions, performed mainly for their symbolic value. It may be prescribed by a religion or by the traditions of a community. The term usually excludes actions which are arbitrarily chosen by the performers. Among anthropologists, and other ethnographers, who have contributed to ritual theory are Victor Turner, Ronald Grimes, Mary Douglas, and the biogenetic structuralists. Contemporary theorists like Michael Silverstein (2004) treat ritual as social action aimed at particular transformations often conceived in cosmic terms. Though the transformations can also be thought of as personal (e.g. the fertility and healing rituals Turner describes), they become a sort of cosmic event, one stretching into “eternity.”

We chose rituals because rites and rituals are repository of age-old beliefs of a group of people, which forms an important part of their cultural matrix. A large part of every culture belongs to the area of tradition, which has been derived by the present generation from their fore-fathers. Traditions influence social relationships profoundly. Rituals serve as a microcosm of the present socio-economic conditions of a region. So it is through these rituals that we wanted to get an encapsulation of the life of Sonapalashi. The ritualistic life of Sonapalashi is very bright and vivacious. The plethora of rituals such as those surrounding old Shiva's Gajan, Dharmaraj's Gajan as well as those performed around the numerous gods and goddesses of Sonapalashi provide an interesting picture of the village. I have tried to analyze these rituals sociologically and provide a portrait of the life style of the village as exuberantly as possible.

Methodology

We, the students of post graduation curriculum of sociology department in Calcutta University, had undertaken this field work as a part of our dissertation . We visited the village and camped there for around a fortnight. We conducted a survey of around one hundred fifty households. The unstructured schedules helped us encode the views of the respondents. We also took in-depth interviews of the veteran villagers actively involved in the organization of the gajan festivals to know facts as perspicaciously as possible. The village librarian, priests and the elderly villagers helped us thoroughly. The narratives of the men who have acted as the gajan ascetics and that of the women of the households who regularly participate in such rituals with rigor, helped us immensely. We used their views with adequate circumspection. We also used the very important secondary source of the book, “*Bengal Peasant from Time to Time*”(1962) by T.K Bose which had provided a vivid encapsulation of the colorful gajan festival of the village.

Old Shiva's Gajan

Gajan's festivals are held in honour of old Shiva, seven days before the *chaitra sankranti*, i.e. the last day of the Bengali calendar year. *Gajan* is derived from the Bengali word '*garjan*', which means loud roaring of the overwhelming crowd that gathers on this occasion. The big gathering of persons coming together celebrate the festival in honor of their deity. Gajan has, therefore, come to mean a folk festival held to worship such village Gods like Shiva and Dharmaraj. Old Shiva's Gajan starts with the initiation of the *mul sanyassi*, i.e. the main or head ascetic and the two *deulias*, i.e. temple bearers, seven days before the chaitra sankranti.

The great bath of the sanyassis at the Ganges——— marks a transition from the realm of profane to the sacred. The sanyassis of Shiva come from all castes. They have to purify their bodies by bath in the Ganges, shave themselves clean, and put on new clothes. Thereafter they are initiated to sanyassi-hood for the consecrated period of the Gajan days. Owing to the barrier that separates the sacred from the profane men cannot enter in intimate relations with the sacred things unless he gets himself rid of all that is profane in him. He cannot lead a religious life of even slight intensity unless he commences anew by withdrawing himself completely from the temporal life. That is why the sanyassis cannot participate into the sacred ceremony of the Gajan unless they have purified themselves. Purification can be of any forms but when an individual has submitted himself to the interdictions, he is no longer the same man that he was before.

Initiation into sanyassihood ——— The first stage of rites de passage.

As an insignia of the sanyassi hood, the ascetic wears the *utri* and then they are regarded to belong to *saiva gotra* above all earthly castes. While wearing the *utri*, the ascetics proclaim '*nija gotra parityaja, shiv gotra parigraha*' [I abandon my clan (gotra) and adopt the saiva clan]. Within this period even if one's father dies, he will not be bound to practice necessary rituals owing to his polluted self. He is thus not expected to follow *ashaucha* (a period of strict abstention followed supposedly by those practicing mortuary rituals). These rituals are well in accordance of what Van Gennep himself calls *rites de passage*. These are the rites, which accompany every change of place, state or social position. Here an ordinary mundane human being is initiated as a sacred sanyassi and so while undergoing this transition, he follows certain stages that are inherent in the '*rites de passage*' Van Gennep has shown that rites of passage or 'transition' are marked by three phases: separation, margin (or limen signifying threshold in Latin) and aggregation. The first phase

(of separation) comprises symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individuals or groups either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions or from both (Gennep:1960). Thus the sanyassis are detached from the mundane earthly life. They debar their family life for a while and adapt Saiva clan to lead a restrained and secluded life over and above the earthly desires. The Brahmins and the Vaidya(the physician caste) votaries who already wear their sacred threads throw away the old ones, and they take the *utri* but devotees of other castes cannot take the same without the ministrations of a Brahmin. For them a gajan Brahmin from Bankura turns up to officiate at the ceremony of handing *utri*. The other caste sanyassis are not allowed to enter inside the old Shiva's temple so they take off the *utri* outside the temple.

The liminal personae of the ascetics of gajan.....the second stage of rites de passage

Sanyassis from different castes bow to one supreme ascetic head. This has yet another significance. This can be called the second phase of 'rites de passage' where the liminal entities manifest a passive behavior. They must obey their instructors implicitly and accept arbitrary punishment without complaint. It is as though they are being reduced or grounded down to a uniform condition to be fashioned anew and endowed with additional powers to enable them to cope with their new station in life(Gennep:1960). Here the sanyassis are these liminal entities endowed with an ambiguous status. They are neither here nor there, they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by ceremonies. Among themselves, neophytes tend to develop an intense comradeship and egalitarianism. The sanyassis of different castes work together as brethren. Secular distinctions of rank and status disappear or are homogenized. What is interesting about Shiva's Gajan is the way it acts as a liminal phenomenon blending lowliness and sacredness, of homogeneity and comradeship. Sonapalashi apparently presents a kind of society where a structured, differentiated and often-hierarchical system of caste and economy prevails, separating men in terms of "more" or "less". It is the rituals of Shiva's gajan, which produces an unstructured and rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated communitas. It generates a community, or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders. A Brahmin sanyassi has to bow down to a Hari head ascetic. This tempers the Brahmin's pride and makes him realize how it pains to be a member of the low cast, which he could not have realized otherwise. The ritual is not just a matter of giving a general stamp of legitimacy to a society's structural positions. It is rather a matter of giving recognition to an essential and generic human bond, without which there could be no society. The Brahmin alone do not constitute Sonapalashi; the haris (the scavenger

caste), doms (caste of scavengers, musicians, and sometimes weavers, traders, or even moneylenders; possibly representing an aboriginal tribe of some influence and power {=domra, dombu}) and bagdis² (a caste of fishermen, palanquin bearers and field labourers) too contribute to its constitution. Liminality implies that the high could not be high unless the low existed, and he who is high must experience what it is like to be low. From the 4th day before the *sankranti*, the gajan of Kanchanpur takes its festive turn. The devotees have not yet taken any food for the day. At night they boil the grains of sun dried rice and some vegetables together for their meals. This dinner is spoiled if there is any sound heard at the time of eating. Whether it is the voice of a man, or the barking of a dog, or the chirping of a lizard. In the stillness of night, closing the doors or windows of his room, the devotee offers his prayers to his gods and partakes of his food. This phase of self-abnegation is known as the "*mohahobissi*" which is performed in the silence of the night. If any sound enters his ears by chance, he has to get up. Next day he has to live on fruits and the day after he has to fast. The sanyassis must undergo these hardships. These are the hardships the ascetics must undergo rigorously to complete the ritual undertakings, however strenuous they may appear to be. The active ascetics in disguise of passive liminal entities work it out to make it to the sacred world of severe discipline and abstention, irrespective of their caste and socio-economic status. These ritual hardships shall purify their profane life, in pursuit of which they are grilled out to level off any conceit or smugness, if they have any.

Brahmin sanyassis bowing before a petty sadgop ascetic.....a case of caste mobility in rural Bengal.

The head sanyassi plays an important role. He is invested with his wand of office to lead the sanyassi of the gajan. He is usually appointed from among the *navasakhs*³. In this context, a brief reference to the *jati* structure in Bengal will not be out of place. Going by the prevalent tradition of caste hierarchy, the castes of Bengal may be divided into six groups. These are the Brahmans, the Baidyas and the Kayasthas, the Nabasakh castes, the ajalchal castes, the intermediary castes ranking between the nabasakhs and ajalchals and the Antyaja castes. However, the general social position of the baidyas and the kayasthas is much higher than that of the nabasakh castes. This is mainly because of their occupation and the privileges that follow from these occupations. The Baidyas and the Kayasthas are mostly landholders and professionals, while the nabasakh castes are both traditionally and predominantly artisans, agriculturists and traders. (Sanyal:1981: 36-37). The nabasakhs are the jal – chal group. i.e. the caste from whose hands the Brahmins accept water to

drink. They occupy a circle outside that of the high caste but as they form a group of non polluting status they occupy distinct segments and are traditionally known as 'navasakhs' (i.e. nine branches). The fourteen castes who are now included in the Nabasakh rank are Gandhabanik(the spice and herb dealer), Sankhabanik(the manufacturer of conch shell ornaments), Kansabanik(manufacturer of bell metal utensils), Tambulibanik(betel leaf and betel-nut dealing caste), Gop(caste of herdsmen, cattle breeders and milk men, in the restricted meaning of sadgop), Tantubay(weaver), Modak(confectioner), Napit(barber), Tili(oil selling caste), Malakar(garland makers), Karmakar(black smith), Kumbhakar(potter), Barui(caste of *pan* growers) and Madhunapit. In certain parts of Bengal, the number of nabasakh castes is fifteen or sixteen. In general social estimation, the nabasakh castes remain below the Baidyas and the Kayasthas. However, like these two castes, they enjoy the right to offer drinking water to the Brahmins. They are also entitled to receive the services of the clean Brahmins in their religious functions. The intermediary castes are also *jalacharaniya*, but the unclean varna Brahmins serve them. A clean Brahmin will pollute his caste if he acts as the priest of the intermediary castes (Sanyal:1981). The head sanyassi is one amongst them but he must be respected by all sanyassis irrespective of caste hierarchy. In this gajan festival, a brahmin sanyassi will be bound to respect a sadgop head ascetic regardless of his caste superiority. Herein lies an instance of caste mobility in rural Bengal.

There are a few instances of social mobility between the thirteenth –fourteenth and the nineteenth-twentieth centuries. The most important of the mobility movements resulted in the emergence of new castes with higher ritual rank. The breakaway groups provide evidences of such mobility from the Gops , Telis, and Bhumijis. They had separated themselves from the parent castes and formed themselves into new castes with new names and higher positions both in the religious and secular contexts. The dissident Gops and Telis who have moved up in groups, came to be known as Sadgops and Tilis respectively. The Sadgops are an offshoot of the pastoral group caste, which had broken away from the parent body at least before the middle of the sixteenth century. By the middle of the seventeenth century, the dissident Gops had established themselves as a political power in certain parts of Birbhum and Gopbhum(spread between the subdivisions of Durgapur and Asansol in Burdwan district.) . The Gops seem to have an important role in spreading the cult of Shiva. The combination of their control over land and political power and cultural achievements helped the dissident Gops in building up a superior status before the eyes of the people. This was popularly validated through popular recognition of their separate

identity as a nabasakh caste known as Sadgops. However, the popular recognition had to be acquired by instituting social services such as temple building and offering lucrative Brahmotra grants (rent-free land grants for the maintenance of the Brahmins). In addition, other ancillary benefits that the Brahmins could get from wealthy patrons also accelerated mobility in rural Bengal. In Gopbhum and in the Sadgop dominated areas in Birbhum, Hoogly and Bankura, and Midnapur, the Sodgops had founded a large number of temples in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They succeeded in securing the services of the clean Brahmins who did not minister to Gops. (Sanyal:1981:46). Thus, the gajan festival in Sonapalashi corroborates the escalated status of the Sadgops who command a significantly higher status in the gajan rituals. He is mounted to a position that he commands respect from even the Brahmin sanyassis. The concentration of the dissident Gops in the peripheral jungle tracts had helped them rise into such prominence as economic and political power. The location of their concentration may also have helped them to raise their social position in terms of ritual rank. As the dominant groups, the bargaining power of the dissident Gops have always been high. The relative isolation of their concentrations, from the settled society in the plains which was the stronghold of Brahminical orthodoxy may have made it easier for them to bargain for higher ritual rank with the society in general and the Brahmins in particular (Sanyal:1981:95).

Thus the Sadgops of sonapalashi command a significant place. Coming from the modest nabasakh castes, the Sadgop priests have come a long way before they have achieved such respect and ritual reverence from the Brahmin community. A brief history of how they have traversed this ardent path makes for an interesting reading. Changes in occupation for comparatively lucrative and respectable ones was the first step to begin with. New occupations helped the dissident groups to dissociate themselves from the parent castes of lower ranks and brought them money and the power and prestige that followed from it. However, some of the aspirant castes such as the madhu and phul napits, barendra suris and chasha dhobas got stuck at this stage. They had to remain satisfied with the limited achievements of getting an elevated position in the secular context. The process of social mobility beginning with the change in occupation up to the formation of new castes with higher social rank, both in the ritual and secular contexts, was completed by only a few groups. Recent studies in social mobility movements have traced the historical movements leading to the formation of at least three castes which had succeeded in acquiring social ranks higher than those of the parent castes from whom they had broken. These are the sadgops, the tilis and Bhumij-kshatriyas.

Caste functional obduracy in Gajan rituals: defying occupational mobility?

This brings us to the gravity of mobility defining the rigidity of the stratification system. Sociologists, of course, differ as to the depth of this rigidity. Sociologists like Bailey⁴ or Leach⁵; for example, described caste in pre-British period, as a “closed system of stratification” where competition between castes was uncharacteristic. M.N Srinivas, on the other hand, pointed out that the caste system even in the pre-British days provided for a certain amount of mobility. He also discussed at length the sources of mobility in the caste system. According to Srinivas, “one of the most potent sources of mobility lay in the system’s political fluidity”. Any caste that achieved political power at the local level could advance a claim to be kshatriya⁶. This theory of caste mobility got a fillip during the advent of British in India. (De: 1989). “When the crown took over the political charge of India from the hands of the East India Company, all authority was employed in order to help British trade and manufacture in place of their Indian counterparts⁷.” “the first effect of the spread of industrial goods was that various artisan and trading castes lost their hereditary occupations”⁸. Though many *jal-chal* groups could favorably shift to accentuated positions, others, especially, the *antyaja* castes retained their lowly positions. This was partly because of aboriginal caste groups whose occupations have remained fluid in contrast to the rigid caste occupations of the higher castes. We find that though higher caste groups could switch on to favourable commercial occupations, when it comes to ritual imperatives, they stick to their native caste functions. The lower castes do not have this luxury to brandish such double vocations. Their occupations though not always fixed hardly bask in the terrain of the pure vocations. Be it commercial or village unifying caste rituals, they remain immured in the bunch of polluted fixed occupations, almost in the Pan Indian mould. They rarely have the grit to break the mould sanctioned for them. Our study seems to confirm this.

We find different castes acting as gajan functionaries contributing their services to the festival. The Goalas provide the milk for the offering made to God. Haris act as dhup sanyassi removing the bad odour and Kotal gives the *gamcha* (towel). One Dutta family from *subarna banik* caste will give fruits to the sanyassis at the end of the ritual. It comprises of four *batashas*, four bananas, four cucumbers and four mangoes. A Paul family of the *subarna banik* caste is the donor of the feast known as the “*Bhakta Bhojan*”, which gives the finishing touch to the year’s gajan. This process of rendering services to Old Shiva’s gajan is to some extent analogous to the Jajmani system. It is the traditional patron-client relationship, which assigns specialization to a *jati*, covering preferred permit-

ted and forbidden occupation. Usually the preferred job of taking off the sacred thread is done by bramhin in this ritual whereas polluting tasks are ascribed to particular low castes. The lower castes are assigned defiling tasks like cleaning the human heads of the crematorium dance, sweeping the *Shivtala*(courtyard of Lord Shiva temple) or carrying censor to remove the bad odor. They are the ritual specialists providing essential services without whom the ceremony cannot be perpetuated. Such exchange of services strengthen solidity and mutual benefits to the ascetics and villagers. Thus the differentiation of functions at old Shiva's gajan makes us reminiscent of the days of old Jajmani system.

The sociological implications of 'mahahabishya'—— an instance of Durkheim's disciplinary and preparatory function

These hardships are the ordeals and humiliations often of a grossly physiological character, to which sanyassis submit themselves. It represents partly a destruction of previous status and partly a tempering of their essence in order to prepare them to cope with new responsibilities and challenges in life. It restrains the higher castes in advance from abusing their privileges. The higher castes have to be shown that in themselves they are clay or dust, mere matter, whose form is impressed upon them by society. Even the higher caste in liminality is a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate on which is inscribed the knowledge and wisdom of the group.

One of the functions of rituals, says Durkheim, is to prepare an individual for social living by imposing on him the self-discipline, the "disdain of suffering" and the self-abnegation without which life in society would be impossible. Social existence is possible only as individuals are able to accept constraints and control.(Nisbet: 1974). Asceticism is an inherent element in all social life. This property of self-abnegation is found in daily life too. Our parents must have made many sacrifices in their life to rear us up. I personally remember my father making harsh renouncement for the sake of my happiness. So do the gajan sanyassis. Any form of rigorous devotion requires denial of pleasures and detachment from self. Ascetic practices are necessary schools where men temper themselves and acquire qualities of disinterestedness and endurance without which there could be no religion. At midnight the drumbeats at shivtala announce the time for making obeisance to the lord. The sanyassis gather there and make their bows to the deity in thirty-six different forms. The priest then distributes the nirmalya (i.e. cast-off flowers of the God) to the votaries and closes the gajan for the day. Next day starts the great rituals in the worship of shiva as Smasaneshwar, i.e. the lord of crematories. It starts with the flower dropping ceremony at about midday and culminates in the crematorium dance in the dusky dawn before another

day breaks. As the drumbeats announce that the flower dropping ceremony has started, the ascetics and the villagers come in flocks to the shrine of the old Shiva. The priest presses a bunch of petaled tagar. The resonant drumbeats go on and on and the priest and the votaries pray on and on for a flower to drop. It is said that the flower that has been dropped by shiva is a sign of his Sanction for commencing the great rite of the smasan puja (worship of the crematorium).

The exotic makeup and outlandish rituals of the gajan sanyassis: a case of euphoria?

The exotic make up of gajan sanyassis starts today. These ascetics are those who have vowed to make *puja* of the Shiva of the crematoria. The *smasan bhaktas* have to be dressed today. They scatter in the different households that take charge of attiring them as mimics of Lord Shiva. The householders offer their respective sanyassis some fruits and then the dressing begins. The face and body of the sanyassis are chalked white, their beards, moustaches and the eyebrows are all painted, and black and red spots are impressed on the body in oil colour. Over his head the sanyasis bear a tinsel crown, and on his neck is a garland of paper flowers as also of *gulancha* and *akanda*. The Shiva's mimic puts on ornaments of flowers on different part of his body. Round his waist he wears a sting of belts and there is a jingling anklet on his feet. He wears a dyed cloth usually of saffron colour and the palms of his hands are tinged with lac. There is a china rose in his lips and in one of his hands there is an earthen cup. In the other hand he holds a sword and a green mango is fixed there on the pointed head. This vivacity and fervor that people show around shiva's gajan by making outlandish dress-up is but one of the functions of rituals that according to Durkheim serves the function of euphoria. Such rituals establish a condition of social refurbishing. Euphoria ensconces a pleasant feeling of well-being. Threatened with regular menaces and conditions of Diaspora, the group counter balances its agony and angst by taking recourse to jubilant, cheerful exuberant rituals(Nisbet:1974). Sonapalashi has its own gamut of problems, be it poverty, dowry, seasonal unemployment, discontentment against Panchayat and many others, for example, a father bogged down with the burden of his daughter's dowry, at least has a day for himself. He suddenly became oblivious of his personal angst and becomes joyful. His heart dances with beats of the drum. At least for that moment the euphoria so generated by the rituals could outdo his glooms and regrets. The man moves into a daze being oblivious of his personal regrets. For the daze to be created, such euphoric extravaganza of ritual ceremonies is needed.

Exchange of green mangoes by Gajan sanyassis—— a case of Radcliffe Brown's ritual Value.

Before the sanyassis leave the household of the dresser, he exchanges the green mangoes for another and hands over the fruits to the mistress or the daughter-in-law of the household and the said fruit is eaten with its cover and seed by the 'bous'(wives) of the family in the belief that such partaking of the fruits will cause fertility in them. Radcliffe Brown while proposing his theory of rituals gives us a new term 'ritual value'. The ritual value is exhibited in the behavior adopted towards the object or occasion in question. Radcliffe Brown has used the term value to refer to a relation between a subject and an object. A social system can be conceived as a system of values. A society consists of a number of individuals bound together in a network of social relations. Social relations require the existence of common interest and of social values. When two or more persons have a common interest in the same object and are aware of their community of interests a social relation is established. In this case of Old Shiva's gajan the exchange of mangoes does have a ritual value. These mangoes are taken by all women of the household to generate seeds of fertility. This particular way of eating the mangoes with its seeds and cover is a special kind of behavior manifested by all such women. It is thus a ritual value. The birth of a child is the common objective of this rural women folk that binds them together. The daughters in law may have discord among themselves. It is on this occasion of Old Shiva's gajan, in the pretext of exchanging mangoes that the disturbed relations between the daughters in law of the household are pacified. This common objective of having a child by exercising this ritual practice in itself is a ritual value. It refurnishes community bond and reaffirms relationships. It is time for the mimic gods to come out of the household. He worships his Lord, and drumbeats begin. The sanyassis moves in the rhythm of a dance and then they dance a dance that is not their own. It is said that he is but the medium through which the Nataraj(i.e Lord Shiva) is making his dance. While dancing he comes out and goes to the site of the Great mother and then to the temple of Smasaneshwar. At the temple of the village smasaneshwar, the *sevait*(priest) distributes the Lord's, *nirmalya* to the sanyassis, on the receipt of which they run out of the village for trek to Kurmun and Parui to pay their respects to the Lord Shiva there. On their return to village about midnight, fruits are distributed to the ascetics at the *ghat*(landing place)of the *Dighi* (tank), and then there is a recess for them for the night(Basu:1962).

The dance of death.....a case of Durkheim's revitalizing function in the 21st century.

At an hour when the dawn is struggling with the night for removing darkness from the face of the earth, beats of drums at the streets of Kanchanpur announces the people that the time has come for the great crematorium dance of the sanyassis .The drumbeats continue to sound and the ascetics singly or in batches run to the north end of the village on the main street from where the dance is to start by the sides of the principal road at the Durga Mandap(pavilion of the Goddess Durga) of the north side and at the central Shivtala. Onlookers stand to see this outlandish , terrible and mad dance of the ascetics of heads of human corpses in one hand and swords in the other. To counteract the loathsome odour of the Human heads, a *dhup sanyassi* accompanies the dancing troop. The corpses belong mostly to children, and most of the heads are fresh with the eyes still glaring. As the sun glides towards the west on the day of the fast, drumbeats announces that the time has now come for the *Dighi – Pranam* (i.e.. the Great obeisance) to be made by the ascetics to their god.

The long prostration begins from the *ghat* of the Dihi tank at the north east of the village and ends at the shrine of the Old Shiva. The Distance is not less than half a mile and the performance is an arduous and exhausting affair. Thereafter the ascetics take a bath and worship Lilavati and Rudra next morning. Finally, the ascetic breaks his fast. It is a blood-cuddling dance with the human corpses .A village ascetic,when asked why he observes the austerities of the gajan, answered : “ The strict discipline, the different rites, the painstaking great Pranam – all these have been transmitted to us from past generations, and who am I to break them? There must be something of value in them; otherwise why did our ancestors follow them?” Herein lies the revitalizing function of rituals as Durkhheim proposed. If society is to be kept alive, its members must be made keenly aware of their social heritage. Traditions must be perpetuated, faith must be renewed, values must be transmitted and deeply embedded .In this task of revitalizing and re –animating the social heritage of a group, rituals play an important part (Nisbet :1974) .A large number of ceremonies include rites whose object is to recall the past through dramatic representation. This is the significance of skull – dance even in this modern era .In the past the corpses of children usually killed in epidemics such as cholera and dysentery were exhumed. But with modern medical facilities controlling epidemics and calamities, such deaths are rare .The number of skulls may have gone down now, nevertheless the ritual is still present and living .The grotesqueness of the dance serves to sustain the vitality of the social heritage and keep its essential parts from lapsing from memory and consciousness .In short, the wild dance of human skull revivify the most essential elements of the collective consciousness, still present in Sonapalas

All is well that ends well—the harmonious blend of the two Gajans

Apart from the Shiva's gajan there is yet another gajan held here in honour of the lower castes. The Gajan of Dharmaraj takes place on the Baisakhi purnima (the full moon day of the Bengali month of baishak – April – May). On the seventh lunar day, the initiation of the head sanyassi and the temple bearers takes place. On the 11th day comes the function of the wearing of the *Utri* (sanyassi's sacred threads) for the general body of the ascetics. It may be noted that there comes no votary to Dharmaraj from amongst the high castes. Though T.K. Bose asserted that the head sanyassi of the Dharmaraj of Kanchanpur has all along been a sadgop but this time a brahmin was made the head sanyassi. On the Twelfth day of the lunar fortnight the Gajaneshwar is taken in procession to the neighbouring villages of Kurmun and Devagram. On the thirteenth lunar day the ascetics have to live on fruits on the fourteenth i.e. the day before *purnima* the ascetics have to fast and take their God in procession through the village streets to different households, which contributes their customary stipends to the Gajaneshwar Dharmaraj. Finally, when the Old Shiva's gajan is officially closed on the first day of the month Baishak the *Napit* (barber) shaves the ascetics and a Dutta Householder distributes mustard oil and turmeric paste to the party. The Priest first takes some oil and a handful of turmeric paste and touches the threshold of the old Shiva. The ascetics then circulate that them among themselves. Mustard oil is then distributed to functionaries of the gajan. The Old Shiva has his quota of distribution of oil and turmeric which, of course, goes to the priest, the different shareholders of *sevaitship* (office of Priesthood), the gajan Brahmins, the head sanyassi, the devotees (temple bearers), the *dhup sanyassi* (censer carrying ascetics), the head sanyassi of Dharmaraj, the *napit*, the *choukidar*, the cleaner of the Human heads of the crematorium dance, the sweeper of shivtala, the *modak* (distributor of oil and turmeric), and many others receive their quota as mark of honor for their services to the gajan. This is unique way of linking the two different gajans. The same old shiva gajan which initially claims to be superior, snobbish and boastful of its own caste status, very surprisingly embraces the gajan of Dharmaraj which it has till date discarded. The distribution of mustard oil is a ritual, which reconciliates the two gajans and tempers the pride of the one to compassionately endear his relatively inferior brethren. Kanchanpur has numerous gods and goddesses. The villagers believe in all gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon: they believe in all the special deities that reign in their own and neighboring villages in their own rights.

Conclusion :

This Gajan festival corroborates the illustrious presence of folk culture in our villages and their vivacious capacity of accommodation and assimilation. Complexity,

interdisciplinarity, and practical application for the present are thus the components of an early preoccupation with folk culture, with the things of folk life, with the folk in general. If one wanted to call this folk culture, one would have to emphasize that it had its essential meaning as a study of the folk and as a study for the folk. That would reflect its involvement as one element, as one part of a political, scientific, and scholarly system of national customs of that age located between the two great social orders. Such studies should be carried on with zest and fervour along with urbane , metrosexual and contemporary issues. Studies on folk culture are inviting for there is little room for an idyllic and romanticizing glorification of the “ honorable old “ folk-nation, no one-sided hyperbole and praise but only a quest for indigenous knowledge and oral history. At this point it is necessary to establish direct contact with the history of folklore as a science and the sociological effort of retrieving the oral history, as was done by the Germanist, cultural historian, and mythologist, Karl Weinhold. In 1891 Karl Weinhold published in his journal the first essay that was to lend a scholarly character to folkloric activity. It was a programmatic essay that for the first time looked into the potential fullness of the material with which this discipline was dealing and that, in the final analysis, could only be researched in an interdisciplinary way! I only hope such efforts will sprout more in the days to come giving a fillip to the studies on folk culture in India. Without this our rich little tradition may soon become redundant and oblivious , at least from public consciousness and life-world..

Endnotes :

1. Liminal refers to an entity suffering from indecision and uncertainty. He belongs to neither here nor there but on the threshold. He is betwixt and between. This idea has been taken from *The rites of passage*(1960), by Arnold Van Gennep, translated by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffé; Introduction by Solon .T Kimball, University of Chicago, Chicago.
2. Taken from *Caste in India*(1946) by J.H Hutton(1946), Oxford University Press, London.
3. The fourteen castes now included in the nabasakh rank have been noted by Hiteshranjan Sanyal in his book, *Social mobility in Bengal*(1981) Papyrus, Calcutta.
4. F.G Bailey(1958), *Caste and the Economic Frontier* ,Oxford University Press..
5. Leach(1960), *Aspects of caste in South India, Ceylon and North West Pakistan*, Cambridge..
6. Cited from .M.N Srinivas,(1972), *Social change in modern India*”, Orient Longman..
7. Noted from N.K Bose(1977), *Culture and Society in India* , Asia Publishing House, (p.231)
8. N.K Bose, op.cit. p.231
9. ibid. p.13

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Acknowledgement :

The dissertation was done as a part of the post graduation programme in the Department of Sociology in Calcutta University under the kind supervision of Professor Swapan Kumar Bhattacharya and Prof. Gayatri Bhattacharya. I owe them deep gratitude.

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GENDER, LANGUAGE AND MARGINALISATION : A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF ANGLO-AMERICAN SOCIOLINGUISTIC THEORIES

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Abstract

The interrelationship of language and society has remained an uncharted territory for majority Sociologists in India, whereas this interrelationship and more specifically, of language and gender has been one of the most interesting areas of Sociolinguistic research both in North America and England. Sociolinguistics, with its emergence in the Anglo-American societies in the second half of the twentieth century (in the 1960s), has focused on the interrelationship of various social variables and language to depict and project how they influence each other. It is found that gender has always been the most researched social factor affecting people's language use and attitude. Most of the linguistic research, focusing on gender dimensions, assumed that gender stereotypes, which function as cognitive patterns of perception, are responsible for the different reception of women's and men's communicative behaviour. It is also shown that gender differences do exist in language and that these differences are quite similar to 'cultural' differences. Most of the researchers working on these issues (eg. Lakoff, Tannen, Cameron, Eckert and Coates etc.), have argued that women's language reflects and produces their subordinate position in society, which not only disqualifies them from positions of power and authority but also leads to their marginalisation in the society. Here, the primary aim of this paper is to critically discuss the role of the sociolinguistic theories in their attempt to establish significant correlation between gender and language and make a critical evaluation in relation to their applicability in Indian scenario.

Introduction :

The relation between gender and language is one of the most attractive and significant areas of Sociolinguistics, which is basically the study of the interrelationship of language and society. But this area is almost an uncharted territory in mainstream Indian Sociology. There is acute dearth of research in Indian sociology as well as under-emphasis on the studies of variations in language use patterns and its social causes like how social variables e.g. gender, education, occupation and social class etc. affect the way language is

expressed and used. That is why here the attempt is to find out how the Anglo-American theories or more specifically the Anglo-American Sociolinguistic theories have dealt with the issues of this interrelationship as well as marginalisation and evaluate these theories critically to determine their applicability in the context of India.

In North America, Sociolinguistics has been one of the most important interdisciplinary subjects since the latter half of the 1960s and pioneering studies on language and 'gender' (Robin Lakoff 1973, 1975, Deborah Tannen 1990, Deborah Cameron 1995, Jennifer Coates 1998, Penelope Eckert 2003) have opened up new avenues of research for both sociologists and linguists. While the first studies in the field focused on differences between the ways men and women talk on a "phonological, morphological, syntactic or lexical level" (Coates 1998: 7), later studies concentrated on findings based on conversational analysis. A number of differences between the ways women and men talk were formally discovered and recorded. Most studies found similar differences; however, concerning the question of why and how these differences had come into being, interpretations vary.¹ Most of the linguistic research, focusing on gender dimensions, has often put forward the hypothesis that gender-specific differences in communication arise in the perception of linguistic interactions. It is assumed that gender stereotypes, which function as cognitive patterns of perception, are responsible for the different reception of women's and men's communicative behaviour.² Lakoff (in *Language and Woman's Place*, in 1975), Tannen (in *You just don't understand*, in 1990) and others have also shown that gender differences do exist in language and that these differences are quite similar to 'cultural' differences³. Gender as a major parameter for language variation appeared in the west, especially in the American societies, under the impact of the feminist movements. Research and theory that address gender differences in language use have burgeoned since the publication of **Robin Lakoff's** (1973, 1975) *Language and Woman's Place*,⁴ though, before Lakoff, **Peter Trudgill's** 1970s research on language and social class (study of Norwich) also showed some interesting differences between men and women. There he found that men were less likely and women were more likely to use the prestige pronunciation of certain speech sounds and in their attempt to achieve higher prestige women often tended towards hypercorrectness.⁵ However it was through Lakoff's study that the research concerning the relationship of language and gender was launched formally.

Major Sociolinguistic Theoretical Perspectives

Gender and language, best seen as a topic or field, is investigated through an increasing

range and diversity of theoretical and methodological approaches. While there is almost an absence of direct approaches to study such correlations in Sociology, but in Sociolinguistics, historically, there has always been diversity of approach within language and gender study, even before today's theoretical complexities. Otto Jespersen (1922) can retrospectively be seen as using 'native speaker intuition' in his chapter 'The woman'. Mary Haas (1944), in her anthropological study of women's and men's speech in Koasati, a Native American language, followed a more empirical approach; this anthropological tradition has shaped present-day ethnographies. Gender and language use was later addressed, more substantially, by variationist sociolinguistics, with gender – or, rather, biological sex – having the status of an independent variable (Labov, 1990, 1966; Cheshire, 1982; Milroy, 1980; Gal, 1978; Trudgill, 1972).⁶

Following this trend of studies, it is now easy to discern that the major theories of gender and language research are classified broadly into four categories of which, Robin Lakoff's work, known as the **deficit** approach is the first one. As the critique of the deficit approach comes the **dominance** perspective followed by the **difference** approach and more recently by the **dynamic** or **discourse** approach. The sociolinguistic theories on language and gender are also classified on the basis of their inclination towards feminism. While dominance and difference theories are seen as the representative of **feminist** perspectives, earlier theories like that of Trudgill presents a **non-feminist** approach.

Deficit Approach :

As presented by Lakoff, "Our use of language embodies attitudes as well as referential meanings. 'Woman's language' has as foundation the attitude that women are marginal to the serious concerns of life, which are pre-empted by men. The marginality and powerlessness of women is reflected in both the ways women are expected to speak, and the ways in which women are spoken of."⁷ Thus arguing that language is fundamental to gender inequality, Lakoff pointed to two areas in which inequalities can be found: *Language used about women, such as the asymmetries between seemingly parallel terms like master and mistress, and language used by women, which places women in a double bind between being appropriately feminine and being fully human.* Lakoff's central argument that "women's language" expresses powerlessness triggered a controversy that continues to this day.⁸ Lakoff proposed that there is a "women's language" and that it is characterized by the more frequent use of nine forms: words related to feminine interests, "empty" adjectives (charming, sweet), tag questions ("you are going to dinner, aren't you?"), hedges (phrases like "sort of", "kind of"), intensifiers ("I am so glad you came!"), hyper-correct

grammar and pronunciations, superpolite forms (“would you mind...”), avoidance of humour eg., women do not tell jokes well and often don’t understand the punch line of jokes, and talking in italics (so, very, quite).⁹ According to Lakoff women also speak less frequently, apologise more, avoid coarse language or expletives, use indirect commands and requests. Lakoff argued that a number of these forms particularly hedges (which include disclaimers, in Lakoff’s scheme) and tag questions, indicate uncertainty or tentativeness. Women use these forms, because of their childhood socialization, and because they are expected and sanctioned to do so.¹⁰ This effectively places women in a double bind. On one hand, women can choose to use tentative language forms, but then they risk being perceived as unintelligent or incompetent (and for men this justifies maintaining women in a subordinate position). Or, on the other hand, women can choose more direct, male language, but then they risk being demeaned and ostracized for being unfeminine. Lakoff argued that these tools helped the speaker avoid committing herself. In the second part of her book, “Why Women Are Ladies,” she presented her theory on three kinds of politeness: distance, deference, and camaraderie politeness, and argued that there was strong societal pressure on women to behave in a certain way, i.e., act like “ladies,” something that was designed to keep them in their place, which is quite a **marginal place** in the society.¹¹

Although highly influential, Lakoff’s work has been subjected to criticism on a number of grounds. Like, Lakoff viewed women’s speech as weak in comparison with men’s. She also relied on literary texts, casual observations and reflections on her own linguistic usages rather than large bodies of empirical evidence in forming her generalisation. She also said that certain language features necessarily connote weakness. **William O’Barr and Bowman Atkins** also challenged Lakoff’s claims in 1980. While working on their research topic “powerless language”, they showed that, language differences are based on situation-specific authority or power and not gender.¹² According to them, the so-called typical features of women’s language, coincides with that of the features of a powerless language. They also maintained, that the term “powerless language” describes the social status of the speaker, and not necessarily relates to their sex.¹³

However, there are several **problems** with O’Barr and Atkins’ account. The *first* is its uncritical use of Lakoff’s set of ‘women’s language’ features, features which Lakoff arrived at through introspection and personal observation, not through empirical research. The *second* is its assumption that any linguistic form, such as a hedge or a tag question, can be matched, one-to-one, with a specific function. This means that their analysis assumes that a hedge such as *sort of*, for example, must express tentativeness. This view has been challenged and many linguists have written about the multifunctional nature of such linguistic forms (for example, Coates 1987, 1996; Holmes 1984, 1995). More fundamentally,

O'Barr and Atkins make the assumption that the value placed on the set of linguistic forms they call "women's language" is independent of culture; in other words, they seem to believe that hedges, for example, are intrinsically weak or tentative. Feminist linguists in English-speaking countries have suggested that the low value placed on forms such as hedges might have less to do with hedges and more to do with their supposed association with female speakers. That means, since female speakers have low status, linguistic forms said to be typical of women will acquire low status by association.¹⁴

Following the trend of the 'first debate' between Lakoff's 'Women's language' and O'Barr and Atkins' 'Powerless language', there has also been rise of a 'second debate', which involves two other major approaches to gender variation in language, the difference approach and the dominance approach.

Early work on language and gender took a dominance approach. The reaction against this, and the subsequent flourishing of the difference approach, arose not because researchers denied the existence of dominance and oppression in male-female relationships, but because researchers, particularly feminist researchers, became unhappy at the negative portrayal of women in work using the dominance approach. Women's language was described as weak, unassertive, and women were presented as losers, as victims.¹⁵

Researchers who began using the difference model in the 1980s argued that the dominance model had become a deficit model, that is, a way of interpreting the linguistic facts which represented men's language as the norm and women's language as deviant. The advantage of the difference model is that it allows researchers to show the strengths of linguistic strategies characteristic of women and to celebrate women's ways of talking. For those carrying out research involving mixed talk, the dominance approach provides a useful explanatory framework, but for researchers investigating same sex talk it seems less appropriate, since dominance and oppression are not obviously helpful categories for the description of all-female talk (or all-male talk, for that matter, but it is only very recently that sociolinguists have turned their attention to the informal talk of men).¹⁶

Nevertheless to continue with the ongoing debate one has essentially to go through the basic tenets of both the theories among which here dominance approach is perhaps the first one.

Dominance Approach :

Chronologically, next comes the **Dominance Approach**, which considers women as an

oppressed group and interprets linguistic differences in women's and men's speech in terms of men's dominance and women's subordination. Researchers associated with this paradigm are Dale Spender, Pamela Fishman, Don Zimmerman and Candace West.¹⁷ This theory suggests that in mixed-sex conversations men are more likely to interrupt than women. With reference to the study of a small sample of conversations, recorded by **Don Zimmerman** and **Candace West** at the Santa Barbara campus of the University of California in 1975, they concluded that, since men interrupt more often, then they are dominating or attempting to do so (when we consider interruptions in light of women's lack of social power, they become "constant reminders of women's subordinate status").¹⁸ Though these claims were also challenged since interruptions do not always reflect dominance, but they might reflect interest and involvement of the male speakers. Beside that, another notable dominance theorist **Dale Spender** advocates a radical view of language as embodying structures that sustain male power. She refers to the work of Zimmerman and West, to the view of the male as norm, and to her own idea of patriarchal order. She claims that it is especially difficult to challenge this power system, since the way that we think of the world is part of, and reinforces, this male power:

*"The crux of our difficulties lies in being able to identify and transform the rules which govern our behaviour and which bring patriarchal order into existence. Yet the tools we have for doing this are part of that patriarchal order. While we can modify, we must none the less use the only language, the only classification scheme, which is at our disposal. We must use it in a way that is acceptable and meaningful. But that very language and the conditions for its use in turn structure a patriarchal order."*¹⁹

Another advocate of the dominance theory, **Pamela Fishman** argues in *Interaction: the Work Women Do* (1983) that conversation between the sexes sometimes fails, not because of anything inherent in the way women talk, but because of how men respond, or don't respond. In *Conversational Insecurity* (1990), Fishman questions Robin Lakoff's theories. Lakoff suggests that asking questions shows women's insecurity and hesitancy in communication, whereas Fishman looks at questions as an attribute of interactions. Women ask questions because of the power of these, not because of their personality weaknesses. Fishman also claims that in mixed-sex language interactions, men speak on average for twice as long as women.²⁰

Continuing with the debate between 'dominance and difference', we can now move forward to refer to **Daniel Maltz** and **Ruth Borker**'s 'A Cultural Approach to Male-Female Miscommunications', which explicitly claims to present a new (anthropological) framework for discussing gender differences in language. Their paper is not based on new

data, but rather presents a synthesis of work on gender and language in a variety of fields. Their argument rests on the claim that the 'difficulties' found in cross-sex communication- like the 'difficulties' found in cross-ethnic communication- are the result of cultural difference and should be seen as miscommunication. They argue that boys and girls are socialized largely in same-sex peer groups between the ages of 5 and 15, and that they learn to use language in very different ways. This means that, when male and female speakers interact as adults, they are working with a different set of assumptions about the way interaction works.²¹ Then according to Maltz and Borker, girls and women ask more questions and do so to facilitate the flow of conversation; whereas boys and men do more interruptions and do so to control conversation. This analysis would imply, then, women are more likely than men to use tentative forms of language because they have been socialized to do so.²²

At the time it was published, many sociolinguists found Maltz and Borker's paper refreshing: it certainly gave impetus to those linguists wanting to carry out research into women's talk outside a framework of dominance and oppression. Certainly, for research into single-sex groups, the difference approach had a lot to offer. But, like all frameworks, it has also its limitations. Probably the main problem with the approach is its assumption that all interactional difficulties can be called 'miscommunications'.²³ Besides, this approach can also be criticized for failing to explain why men and women use certain forms of language on some occasions and not on others.²⁴ However, despite this loophole, this theory had immense popular appeal and also it had significant influence on the works of Deborah Tannen, who is best known as the proponent of the 'difference perspective'.

Difference Approach :

Theorists associated with the **Difference perspective** proposed that women and men speak differently because of fundamental differences in their relation to their language, perhaps due to different socialization and experiences early on.²⁵

According to these theorists, the problems of the dominance approach lie in their basic assumptions, like not only their views are based on a simplified view of gender identities and relations, but also often these assumptions disregard context and generalises from specific settings. Though they focused on men's dominance and women's subordination but failed to recognise and analyse the principal reasons behind this. Apart from this though this approach explicitly acknowledges the importance of power relations, it is criticised because of failing to recognise the social, historical and political situatedness of power. Another major or perhaps most important problem of this theory is that they have taken

women for granted as deficient and powerless victims. Moreover, Weatherall (2002:67) argues that the dominance approach has drawn attention away from the fact that gender is an important issue in language research, and that it has encouraged women to adopt the male speech style. Additionally, the dominance approach fails to recognize that there are other dimensions to power, for instance race and class, which, in some circumstances, result in some women having more power than some men (Speer 2005:41).²⁶

Now, with reference to the emergence of the difference theory, the very popular *You Just Don't Understand* by **Deborah Tannen** (1990) has often been taken as representative of this framework. Drawing on work by Daniel Maltz and Ruth Borker (1982), Tannen argued that girls and boys live in different subcultures analogous to the distinct subcultures associated with those from different class or ethnic backgrounds. As a result they grow up with different conventions for verbal interaction and interaction more generally.²⁷ To quote from Tannen's paper 'Talk in the Intimate Relationship: His and Hers',

*Male-female conversation is always cross-cultural communication. Culture is simply a network of habits and patterns gleaned from past experience, and women and men have different past experiences. From the time they're born, they're treated differently, talked to differently, and talk differently as a result. Boys and girls grow up in different worlds, even if they grow up in the same house. And as adults they travel in different worlds, reinforcing patterns established in childhood. These cultural differences include differing expectations about the role of talk in relationships and how it fulfils that role.*²⁸

That is why author Ronald Wardaugh has put Tannen's view in this way that part of the socialization process is learning not only gender related activities and attitudes but also gender related language behaviour.²⁹

Professor Tannen has summarized her book *You Just Don't Understand* in an article in which she represents male and female language use in a series of six contrasts. These are:

- 1 Status vs. support
- 1 Independence vs. intimacy
- 1 Advice vs. understanding
- 1 Information vs. feelings
- 1 Orders vs. proposals
- 1 Conflict vs. compromise³⁰

Here Tannen argues that men generally use those forms of language, which seeks to

maintain their status, whereas women's language use is more often to gain confirmation and support for their ideas. Men are more likely to project their independence through their language use and speaking style and often they are inclined to give either advice or even orders to others to prove their supremacy. But in these respects women, according to Tannen are just the opposites, since they use language in such a way, which reflects their intimate and understanding nature as well as also show their inclination towards suggesting something rather than just ordering it. Tannen also added that while men are very particular and brief in communicating information, women tend to express their feelings more often through their language. Finally, according to her, since generally women do not want to get involved in any kind of conflicting situation, so in order to avoid direct confrontation they are more likely to make a deal of compromise with others. Whereas men most often indulge in direct confrontation and conflict especially through the use of their language. As an example of this statement Tannen said that in work-situations where a management decision seems unattractive - men would often resist it vocally, while women may appear to accede, but complain subsequently. Of course, this is a broad generalization - and for every one of Deborah Tannen's oppositions, we will know of men and women who are exceptions to the norm.³¹ Besides, Deborah Tannen's distinction of information and feelings is also described as report talk (of men) and rapport talk (of women). The differences can be summarized in a table ³².

Women	Men
● Talk too much	● Get more air time
● Speak in private contexts	● Speak in public
● Build relations	● Negotiate status/avoid failure
● Overlap	● Speak one at a time
● Speak symmetrically	● Speak asymmetrically

As the critique of the dominance theory, though difference approach attempted to overcome its drawbacks but it was also not free from certain loopholes. Generally it is being criticized because of paying little attention to contexts of communication and changes in individuals and groups over time. Then here only gender differences were focused rather than the similarities and most importantly this framework has taken an essentialist view of gender as a stable and inherent feature in speakers.³³ Besides, Troemel-Ploetz claims that Tannen fails to make clear that women's and men's different ways of talking are not different-but-equal, but that men's ways of talking have high status in society while women's talk is denigrated. Moreover, Tannen's book feeds into the genre of self-help books aimed at

women which perpetuate the view that, where things aren't working, then it is women who need to adapt.³⁴

However, in reality actually all the theories are interrelated because women's different and deficient (Lakoff) speech patterns are not the result of inherent biological or mental deficiency, but rather of differential experiences (difference) in life and men's greater power in society may be a factor in perpetuating women's weaker use of language (dominance).).

Dynamic / Discourse Approach :

Apart from these approaches the fourth and most recent approach is called the **Discourse** approach or sometimes the **Dynamic** approach because there is an emphasis on dynamic aspects of interaction. Researchers who adopt this approach take a social constructionist perspective. **Social constructionism**, broadly defined, sees gender as:

- The active/interactive/negotiated construction of gender, including self-positioning.
- Linguistic dealings *with* (individual/groups of) women, men, boys and girls, e.g., how they are addressed, what is said *to* them.
- What is said and written *about* gender differential tendencies, similarities and diversity, including what is said and written *about* (individual/groups of) women, men, boys and girls. Thus, social constructionist perspectives de-emphasize gendered speakers (and writers) as agents, focusing rather on *what* is communicated *by, to* and *about* women, men, boys and girls.³⁵

As West and Zimmermann (1987) eloquently put it, speakers should be seen as 'doing gender' rather than statically 'being' a particular gender.³⁶ Here language is seen as a symbolic resource that speakers can draw on selectively and strategically to perform masculine or feminine identities according to context.³⁷ Beside these various approaches, in an essay by Jennifer Coates in Sara Mills edited *Language & Gender* she has argued that women and men speak differently, tending to use cooperative and competitive speech styles respectively. She goes on to argue that women and men are still largely segregated into the private and public sphere and that this division results in language differences, and differences in attitude to women's and men's speech.³⁸

Then in Dr. Lillian Glass' book "He Says, She Says: Closing the Communication Gap Between the Sexes (The Putnam Berkeley Group)", she has given detailed findings on the many differences in the way men and women communicate, both verbally and non-verbally. According to her these differences are found in their body language, facial expression, speech patterns and behaviour.³⁹ Some suggest that emphasising gender differences is

tantamount to supporting and maintaining inequalities (Weatherall, 1998), especially when women are defined as “other” than men, and are thus automatically disadvantaged.⁴⁰

Apart from these major sociolinguistic theories, in the writings of **French Feminists** also (eg. Julie Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous, and Monique Wittig) we find flourishing discussions on the interrelation between gender and language. Here we can refer to their approach to examining how gender is constructed in language and discourse.⁴¹ In Cate Poynton’s “Language and Gender: Making the Difference”, for instance, the focus is on the ideological reasons for language practices that keep women alienated from power. Elaine Showalter also echoes Poynton’s appeal to a universal female oppression, suggesting that (a phallographic) language structure is not the problem; the problem is getting the “full resources of language” to women so that they might begin to alter language usage as they speak themselves into it (“Wilderness”).⁴² Apart from that French feminist-psychoanalyst and philosopher Luce Irigaray has examined the uses and misuses of language in relation to women in such works as “Speculum of the Other Woman” (1974), which argues that history and culture are written in patriarchal language and centred on men.⁴³

Reviewing all these significant theories on the relationship of language and gender, it becomes quite obvious and clear that women’s language use and style of speaking have always been the most common and important sources of their subordination and thus also their marginalisation. **Marginalisation** is often defined as the powerlessness and exclusion experienced by a group, resulting from an inequality of control of ‘resources and power structures’ (Kenny 1999 p 22) within society. Feminism argues that women are marginalized due to the patriarchal structure of society (Andrews 200 p28).⁴⁴ In history we have always found that women are marginalized because of being other than men. While talking about women’s language Lakoff also turned her attention to the fact that it’s not always the case that women have all the problems that it’s easy for men and their lives are simple. It’s not that they aren’t constrained or bound into roles. Here she has referred to an unpublished paper by Larry Josephson, which discusses that men and their language are just as constrained in what they are supposed, and not supposed to say as are women. If men are too grammatical or too polite in their speech, they are viewed with suspicion.⁴⁵ If a man learns to speak men’s language, is otherwise unambiguously placed in his society as a man, his is a relatively simple position. In a traditional culture his rewards are easy to see. He is not only listened to but taken seriously as well. His learning of his proper language brings purely positive results in terms of how people react to the way he talks. But the thing is not the same for women. If a woman doesn’t learn to speak women’s language in traditional society she’s considered dead. So that is not a possible option, unless a young girl is exceedingly brave, in fact reckless. But usually if she learns the conventional way of

talking like a lady, as her reward, she becomes accepted as a suitable female. But here she also faces the problem of not being taken seriously purely because of her speaking style. Even she is often treated as an individual of dim intelligence, frivolous, and also as someone, who is incapable of understanding anything important.⁴⁶ This can sometimes be an acceptable position but surely it's hard to maintain forever. Lakoff has also added that if a woman learns and uses women's language, she is necessarily considered less than a real, full person- she's a bit of fluff. So that means, a woman is damned if she does and damned if she doesn't. On one hand, if women choose to use tentative language forms, then they have the risk of being perceived as unintelligent or incompetent (and for men this justifies maintaining women in a subordinate position). On the other hand, if they choose more direct, male language, they risk being demeaned and ostracized for being unfeminine. It has been observed that the narrow definition of women in language refers to the fact that women are more often discussed in terms of their appearance and their family relationships, whereas men are generally discussed in terms of what they do.⁴⁷ So, in reality actually the case is that the distinction between men's and women's language is a symptom of a problem in our culture, not the problem itself. Basically it reflects the fact that men and women are expected to have different interests and different roles, hold different types of conversations and react differently to other people and ultimately this language discrepancy makes manifest social inequality. Lakoff argued that these tools helped the speaker avoid committing herself.

Conclusion :

Now turning our attention to our own country, we'll find that gender stereotypes in India also get reflected in normal conversations. Language reflects social reality about the position of women while the social identity of women is in turn performed through the language and linguistic gender stereotyping is a socially constructed way of classifying and categorizing members of the society. In case of gender relations in India a kind of supportive role is permanently assigned to women turning it into an unconscious submission to authority. While the male counterpart in a mixed conversation can be 'ambitious, aggressive and decision maker' the female speaker in India is generally expected to play a supportive role, to follow the compassionate, understanding stereotype. So it can be said that it is vital for the members of a speech community to conform to the prescribed linguistic behaviour to establish their social identity or rather their **gendered social identity**. Gender stereotypes affect the expectations of a particular linguistic behaviour placed on women but they do not spare the males either. It is this stigma of a lower social status attached to a "female way of speaking" in a man, which teaches men to conform to the prescribed norms. Individuals using prototypical male language are judged to be more dynamic than

individuals using prototypical female language, whereas individuals using prototypical male language are judged to be more aesthetically pleasing and socio-intellectual than individuals using prototypical female language. Violation of these norms of speaking marks out the *hijras* as social outcasts even before they start forming their gender identity.⁴⁸

Thus, language, one of the most significant mediums of expression and representation, often acts as a catalyst for gender discrimination. And each language has inherent in it expressions that are indicative of society's differential treatment for women, which is on the whole negative. So, in sum language is not a gender-neutral instrument of expression nor is it free from socio cultural prejudices. It contributes to the process of shaping and reshaping of identities by virtue of its own dynamic nature and thereby gets used creatively or gets manipulated to create social distinctions. These distinctions further place individuals, both women and men in such social positions, where they are accorded a lower and marginal social status. The Anglo-American sociolinguistic theories thus have proved to be quite relevant and applicable in the Indian context too. Here, in the Indian patriarchal society language acts as a tool of coercion as well as it is internalised as part of learning to be a woman, imposed on women by societal norms and in turn keeps them in their place, which is quite a marginal place in the society. Besides, the language used about women is often derogatory e.g., the frequent uses of certain so-called offensive and sexist language (e.g., English words like 'whore', 'slut', 'mistress' etc., and also in Bengali and Hindi words like 'haramjadi [synonym of English word 'bitch'], 'dajjal' [implying very dominating], besya [prostitute], daini [witch] etc. and many more) not only devalue and marginalize women but also stigmatise and victimize them. 'Ardhangini' is also one common word used euphemistically in many Indian languages, which is originally a Sanskrit word. This means that woman forms one half of a man. But the deep underlying meaning is that a woman is not looked upon as a complete individual but as a part of man. She has no identity of her own except through her husband. Moreover, Using words like "Sati (virgin and chaste)", "Narittwo (womanhood)", "Matrittwo (motherhood)" etc. also not only question about women's character but also imply that women are born in society for performing their sole responsibility of reproduction and child rearing. Thus, society's bias against women is reflected not only in the proverbs but also in the idiomatic expressions of that society's language.

Yet this is hardly taken into concern as a serious issue for exploration, especially in India by mainstream-malestream social scientists and since women generally encounter such gendered language on a daily basis they not only consider them as mere negative linguistic representations but also accept the situation habitually as 'natural'. Hence, they

often yield to the surrounding state of affairs and, thus become gradually incapable even to recognize and realize the degree and intensity of their second-grade existence. Marginalization and becoming victims become the integral part of their daily life. Ergo, by remaining silent and subservient about language abuses in daily interactions, these abuses are legitimised as kernel distinguishing departure point between 'good and bad' women, between 'Madonnas and Whores'. Thus ultimately they forget to protest for themselves, for the resurgence of their dignity and also for coming out of their victim-status, which then becomes quite a 'master-status' for them. Thus, time and again women are marginalized and victimized in society and their linguistic uses act as a catalyst for their disempowerment and also legitimise the conventional patriarchal ensemble of relations, values and structures.

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Title: Social Adjustment and Feeling of Loneliness: Observations on the Elderly Residents in Old Age Homes (OAH) & Household settings in Kolkata.

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Abstract: There has been a progressive increase in both the number and proportion of the aged in India over time. The changes in demographic as well as social context of India have resulted in presenting different types of living arrangement for the elderly. India faces a distinctive situation in providing care for its elderly as the accessible old-age support structures in the form of family are fast corroding and the elderly are ill-equipped to cope alone with their lives. The onus of caring for the elderly is necessitating the mushrooming growth of Old Age Home. But the inmates often confront problems due to highly institutionalized, depersonalized and bureaucratic atmosphere in OAHs. They face problems of adjustment with tight and rigid schedule, total or near total separation from the family/ social milieu, loneliness, anxiety over entrusting oneself to a new environment. So, this paper aimed to observe the nature of social adjustment and the loneliness of elderly living in OAH and in Household. The objectives of this paper were to study the nature of social adjustment and loneliness of male elderly in Old Age Home and Household Setting, to study the nature of social adjustment and loneliness of female elderly people elderly in Old Age Home and Household Setting, Accordingly data were collected from the purposive sample consist of 200 elderly boarders aged above 65 years with capacity to perform their Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) from 10 Old Age Homes in Kolkata (10 from each) by using three tools namely –1) General information schedule 2) Revised UCLA loneliness scale (RULS), [Dan Russel Otitia Peplau and Carolyn Cutron 1980] 3) The Social Adjustment Scale (Dr. Roma Pal, Agra University,1989). Data were processed for qualitative and quantitative analysis and data-based facts highlighted the following –1) male elderly who are living in old homes feel more socially adjusted than those who are living with their families 2) Male elderly living in Old Age Homes are lonelier than living in Household setting.3)) Female elderly living with their family members are socially well adjusted and have lesser social adjustment problems as compared to the elderly living in old age homes.4) Female elderly living in Old Age Homes are lonelier than living in Household setting

Introduction:

A perusal of varied literature on Indian society and culture, particularly generated by

ethnographers, and subsequently by anthropologists and sociologists, suggests that the twentieth century recorded certain changes of far reaching importance in the family system under the influence of westernization, industrialization, modernization and greater population mobility across the sub-continent. Since time immemorial the joint family has been one of the salient features of the Indian society. But the twentieth century brought enormous changes in the joint family system and it is steadily on the wane from the urban scene. There is absolutely no chance of reversal of this trend. In villages the size of joint family has been substantially reduced or is found in its fragmented form. (Singh, 2004: 129-166). The emergence of financially independent, career-oriented men and women, who are confident of taking their own decisions and crave to have a sense of individual achievement, has greatly contributed to the disintegration of joint family. The family has started facing a new kind of problem emanating from a relatively faster pace of demographic transition. The incredible increase in life expectancy may be a big triumph of the 20th century, but it has posed one of the toughest problems before the 21st century India. Census reports have revealed that the Indian population approximately tripled during the last 50 years, but the number of elderly people had in fact increased more than fourfold.

In the past the joint family system not only provided a suitable umbrella to manage personal risks, such as risks of premature death and excessive longevity, but also laid down the norms of intergenerational relationships as well as the role of each member. The elderly played a significant role in decision making regarding household matters, while the younger people were entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring well-being of their ageing parents. But these days in smaller families, they are gradually marginalized in the decision-making process. Hence, the family that traditionally took care of the elderly or sick, widows and orphans has begun to rely on society as a whole. As the number of old persons is rising and the social environment is changing, the proportion of the destitute among them may also be increasing (National Human Development Report, 2001). These factors are also leading to the need for a large number of old-age homes where the old people may enjoy the remaining part of their life in a group of their own. As a consequence of the breakdown of traditional joint and extended families the elderly people are being steadily marginalized in society generally.

Ageing is a phase of life and episodic in nature. Elderly constituting about 7 % of the total population is likely to increase 10% by 2016 .The size of the elderly rose in absolute terms during the last century from 12 million in 1901 to approximately 71 million in 2001 and is likely to reach 113 million in 2016. (Directory of Old Age Homes in India, Help Age India, 2002). The problems of elderly are confined not only to their increasing numbers,

but also include adjustment problem, loneliness, mental stress and physical incapability. The predicaments of elderly from their increased longevity which with the passage of time leads to progressive generalized impairment of body functions, creating emotional insecurity, loneliness, lack of social contact and social support and care, giving space to acute sense of role loss, lack of adjustment, lack of decision- making power, lack of meaningful connectedness with a significant other, lack sense of belongingness along with loneliness and a feeling of lack of accomplishment, unhappiness due to non-recognition and marginalization leading to loss of confidence.

The changes in demographic as well as social context of India have resulted in presenting different types of living arrangement for the elderly consequently Old Age Homes is not an alien concept in Kolkata too. The major reasons of choosing to live in Old Age Homes are due to the trends in social ageing that suggest that new social demands dominate the development agenda as the 21st century unfolds. In the past, with smaller numbers and percentages of older persons families and relatives were the primary providers of financial security and care for their loved ones for a limited number of years. This notion is disappearing fast in the face of an ever growing number of elderly persons and shrinking pool of younger generations, with rise of dual career families there is no one to take care of older member who increasingly experience forced marginalization and seclusion, shortage of place in residence. Hence in order to avoid family conflict (especially with children), to be able to live life of dignity and self respect with peace of mind as well as to be cared for in better way they prefer to live in Old Age homes.

According to National sample survey Organization, 36.7% of 70 Million elderly want to shift to old homes because they can't manage alone. A large number of old men and women badly need health care, financial assistance, social recognition and counseling services to cope up with stress for overcoming 'death anxiety', 'sense of isolation', feeling of social deprivation due to negligence, "feeling of disability and dependency", "low social esteem and lethargic feelings" [Dutta 1989, Rammurti 1962]. Usually living in an old age home evokes a picture of apathy, dependence and sadness. The inmates often confront problems due to highly institutionalized, depersonalized and bureaucratic atmosphere in OAHs. They face problems of adjustment with tight and rigid schedule, total or near total separation from the family/social milieu, loneliness, anxiety over entrusting oneself to a new environment, diminished physical capacity and very close and frequent encounters with death and ailments in the institution. (Mishra (1993) opined that in spite of being in need of relief from their problems, the aged do not want to be segregated, but prefer to remain integrated in the network of social relationships. Institutionalization of elderly should be viewed as the last option and any alternative arrangement for an elderly living other than with his/her family members seems to be a partial solution, (Rajan et al 1999). However,

due to unavoidable circumstances a good number of old people are being sent to old age homes. In Indian context, institutionalization of elderly parents is not a popular option and still draws social disapproval. **Moving to an old age home is a social stigma stated that with the rising cult of consumerism, rapid urbanization and modernization, the elderly tend to get increasingly alienated from the younger generations.** Thus family support system is diluting except at the time of medical emergency leading to loneliness due to marginalization of the elderly in their own home. Elderly in India find this a strain even when they have to stay alone as they are accustomed to their own homes. So, there is urgent need of considering social adjustment and loneliness of elderly living in Old Age Homes and in Household as researchable variables.

Objectives:

- 1) to study the nature of social adjustment of male elderly in Old Age Home and Household Setting
- 2) to study the nature of social adjustment of female elderly people elderly in Old Age Home and Household Setting
- 3) to study the nature of loneliness of male elderly people elderly in Old Age Home and Household Setting
- 4) to study the nature of loneliness of female elderly in Old Age Home and Household Setting

Method

Variables:

Loneliness:

Loneliness is an individual's subjective experience of a lack of satisfying human relationships, and thus it is a negative feeling causing distress to an individual. Loneliness is a complex set of feelings encompassing reactions to the absence of intimate and social needs, as an emotional state in which a person experiences a strong feeling of emptiness and isolation.

Social adjustment:

Adjustment is harmonious relationship with the environment in which most individual needs are satisfied in socially acceptable way, and resulting in form of a behavior which may range from passive conformity to vigorous action .Adjustment is a precarious and ever changing balance between the needs and desire of the individual on the one hand and

the demands of the environments or society on the other. Both the social and emotional aspects of adjustment were considered as measured variables. In this paper the concept of Roma Pal, 1989 of social adjustment has been taken.

Area of Study : - Old Age Homes (O.A.H) and household (family) settings under Kolkata

Old Age Home : Old age homes serve as a guide for senior citizens and provide facilities such as the kinds of accommodation (dormitory, single rooms), medical services and recreation facilities available in the city's old age homes.

Household : Household denotes family setting where elderly person lived with their family i.e with their spouse or/and married or unmarried son or daughter and with daughter-in-law and grand children with in a community and where friends, neighbors and relatives are also available.

Sample :

In this study two-stage sampling method was used in the following way-

- i) Selection of the Old Age Homes
- ii) Selection of the Elderly People

Sample drawn from 10 Old Age Homes within the jurisdiction of Kolkata selected from a list provided by the Social Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal and in house hold setting from the same 10 wards in Kolkata.

A sample of 200 old persons was selected from old homes and community. 100 pensioners residing in Old Age Homes (50 male & 50 female) & 100 (50 male & 50 female) living with their families from diverse socio-cultural background have been studied through purposive sampling method to meet the needs of the study.

Area of study and respondents will be selected on the basis of the following inclusion criterion:

Sample selection criteria

Selection of Old Age Home and Household:

- i) Homes having at least 20 boarders each.
- ii) Having a health check up system weekly/fortnightly
- iii) Household was selected on the basis of snowball sampling Selection of Respondents

Selection of Respondents

- i) Minimum 65 years of age in both the sub groups.
- ii) They were home boarders for at least five years.
- iii) Elderly who are capable of Activities of Daily Living. * (ADLs) in both sub groups).
- iv) Elderly who are pension holders.

*In Gerontological literature Activities of Daily Living (ADL'S) are operationalized as personal-care activities such as Ambulating (walking), Transferring (getting up from a chair), Dressing, Eating, Drinking, Personal Hygiene (bathing, using the toilet) and Taking medication etc. (Raju, 2002; Dunlop, et al. 1997; Everard et al. 2000).

Tools used: -

- 1) General information schedule (Containing both open and close ended question on socio-economic status.)
- 2) Revised UCLA loneliness scale (RULS), [Dan Russel Otitia Peplau and Carolyn Cutrona, 1980]
- 3) The Social Adjustment Scale (Dr. Roma Pal, Agra University, 1989).

Data Collection: - Face to face interview by visiting the respondents in their old age homes and household.

Statistical test: - Mean, Standard Deviation and 't'.

Results and Interpretation

a) Male Elderly :

Category	Mean	S.D	df	t	Remarks
Old people living in old age Homes (N-50)	94.52	5.70	(N1+N2)-2 = 48 0.05-2.02 0.01-2.71	4.73	Significant at 0.01 level
Old people living in household setting (N-50)	89.04	7.09			

Table-I: - Showing the Mean, S.D of 100 Male elderly living in Old Age Home and Household of Kolkata on the Social Adjustment Scale Score & the “t” values showing significance of difference between two means

The analysis of data of Table-I shows that male elderly who are living in old homes feel more socially adjusted than those who are living with their families. Mean value for social adjustment is 94.52 & 89.04 and S.D. 5.70 & 7.09 for male elderly living in old age homes and with their families respectively which shows significant difference in social adjustment of both the groups. The obtained ‘t’ value is 4.73 at 48 degree of freedom & 0.01 level of significance which is higher than table value (2.71) which confirms that male elderly living in Old Age Home are more adjusted and have lesser social adjustment problems than male elderly living with their family. One of the reasons behind such difference is that

Table-II: - Showing the Mean, S.D of 50 Male elderly living in Old Age Home and Household of Kolkata on UCLA loneliness Scale Score & the “t” values showing significance of difference between two means

Category	Mean	S.D	df	t	Remarks
Old people living in old age Homes (N-25)	47.06	8.62	(N1+N2)-2=48 0.05-2.02 0.01-2.71	4.73	Significant at 0.01 level
Old people living in household setting (N-25)	39.3	9.49			

Table II shows there are significant difference between two groups of elderly. Mean value for loneliness is 47.06 & 39.3 and S.D. 8.62 & 9.49 for male elderly living in old age homes and with their families respectively which shows significant difference in loneliness of both the groups. The obtained ‘t’ value is 4.35 at 48 degree of freedom & 0.01 level of significance which is higher than table value (2.71) which confirms that male elderly living in Old Age Homes are lonelier than living in Household setting. One of the reasons behind differences is that in household setting the environment is prior known to elderly where according to exchange theory interaction is maintained because individual find such

interaction rewarding for whatever reasons. Interaction with aged person decreases because it is less rewarding and consequently leads to a reduction in the size of social support network which leads to loneliness.

b) Female Elderly

Table-III: - Showing the Mean, S.D of 100 Female elderly living in Old Age Home and Household of Kolkata on the Social Adjustment Scale Score & the "t" values showing significance of difference between two means

Category	Mean	S.D	df	t	Remarks
Old people living in old age Homes (N-30)	85.88	7.96	(N1+N2)-2=48 0.05-2.02 0.01-2.71	4.74	Significant at 0.01 level
Old people living in household setting (N-30)	92.7	8.05			

The analysis of data of Table-III shows that female elderly who are living in old homes expressed significantly more social adjustment problems than those who are living with their families. Mean value for social adjustment is 84.88 & 92.7 and S.D. 7.96 & 8.05 for female elderly living in old age homes and with their families respectively which shows significant difference in social adjustment of both the groups. The obtained the 't' value is 4.74 at 48 degree of freedom & 0.01 level of significance which is higher than table value (2.71) which confirms that female elderly living with their family members are socially well adjusted and have lesser social adjustment problems as compared to the elderly living in old age homes.

Elderly women feel more adjusted in Household because in household setting elder women are more active and their interaction pattern and physical proximity of other person is greater than in O.A.H. Such finding of differences were observed by other researchers - Dutta (1989) and Saha (1984) also observed that low social worth and self esteem and feeling of social deprivation due to negligence & sense of isolation and poor adjustment in the society in old people living in old age homes than who were living with their families.

Table-IV: - Showing the Mean, S.D of 50 female elderly living in Old Age Home and Household of Kolkata on UCLA loneliness Scale Score & the “t” values showing significance of difference between two means

Category	Mean	S.D	df	t	Remarks
1 Old people living in old age Homes (N-25)	47.38	10.26	(N1+N2)-2=48 0.05-2.02 0.01-2.71	8.89	Significant at 0.01 level
2 Old people living in household setting) (N-25)	39.02	10.18			

Table IV shows there are significant difference between two mean groups of female elderly. Mean value for loneliness is 47.38 & 39.02 and S.D. 10.26 & 10.18 for female elderly living in old age homes and with their families respectively which shows significant difference in loneliness of both the groups. The obtained the ‘t’ value is 8.89 at 48 degree of freedom & 0.01 level of significance which is higher than table value (2.71) which confirms that female elderly living in O.A.H are lonelier than living with their family. Samat and Dhillon (1992) findings revealed that the institutionalized elderly had greater feelings of loneliness, depression and hopelessness compared to the aged who were living either with their children or independently. Few social contacts as well as absence of mutually rewarding relationships with others resulting in loneliness another form of social disability (Socialstyrelsen 2007).

Social loneliness which involves the deficiency of a social network or “the absence of a place in an accepting community” is also called social isolation (Andersson *et. al.*, 1987). The feelings in this form of loneliness revolve around boredom, a lack of focus, and a sense of being marginalized or rejected by peers. Once this individual has access to a network of social interaction, the symptoms usually dissipate. However, Weiss believed there were as many as six different types of relationships that are all required by an individual (Vincenzi and Grabosky, 1987) and a deficit in any one of them could produce feelings of social loneliness.

Conclusion:

The database revealed the following inferences

- 1) Male elderly who are living in old homes feel more socially adjusted than those who are living with their families. Due to the Patriarchy social structure, male person in our country usually play authoritative role in family but in old age they feel lack of power and they can't accept the subordinate position in family where they were in superior position previously, so they feel less adjusted in family, but in Old Age Home they do not feel any subordination, but feel free to live, so their adjustment is also better in Old Age Home. With the changing family power structure, male elderly can't able to adjust; rather they choose to live alone and in a new setting. The Disengagement theory (Cumming, 1963) postulates that society withdraws from the aging person to the same extent as the person withdraws from society, so elderly feel less adjusted.
- 2) Male elderly living in Old Age Homes are lonelier than living in Household setting. Loneliness was less among the Household residents as they were engaged in various types of activity like doing bazar (marketing), light and telephone bill payment ect. but in OAH they need not to involve in any activities except passing their time leisurely. And engaging in activities helped the elderly in overcoming loneliness, improves their functional abilities and augments self-esteem. (Mishra, 2003)
- 3) Female elderly living with their family members are socially well adjusted and have lesser social adjustment problems as compared to the elderly living in old age homes; The non-institutionalized elderly living with children were better in adjustment than the other institutionalized groups. The finding that the non-institutionalized elderly female were better adjusted than of the institutionalized elderly female was also supported by Lohmann (1977). Good adjustment and happiness in old age were found to be associated with pleasant, social and emotional relations with the members of one's family, and the privacy and independence provided by living in their own home. Landis (1942) also found that the preference for living with children was one of the variables positively related to the adjustment of the elderly. Living in family as one of the factors related to happiness and adjustment of the elderly. The important predictors of family satisfaction of the elderly were found to be satisfaction with friends, satisfaction with living arrangement and having children.

Home bound elderly are more active, more satisfied, more adjusted, had more

social contacts and hence are more advantageous position than the elderly living in Old Age Homes. Ramachandran et al (1981) found that family cohesion and living condition were significant factors affecting the mental health and adjustment of the elderly. Socio-environmental theory, Gubrium, (1973) directs itself at the understanding that the effects of the immediate social and physical environment on the activity pattern of aged individuals.

- 4) Female elderly living in Old Age Homes are lonelier than living in Household setting. Emotional and social loneliness theories refer to the social isolation by the number of contacts and integration of an individual into the surrounding social environment (Cattan & White 2005). If a person is socially isolated his or her possibilities for social comparison and personal control are diminished, he/she will face loneliness. In case of female elderly living in OAH, social contact decreases, so their loneliness increases. Aged females, irrespective of institutionalization, felt more depressed, lonely and pessimistic than aged males.

Loneliness is the subjective experience of social isolation. It has been defined as an unpleasant subjective state of sensing a discrepancy between the desired amount of companionship or emotional support and that which is available in the person's environment (Blazer, 2002). Old age often brings a "realignment" of public and private selves (Larson, 1990), it also bring a diminution in a person's role, within and outside of the family (Rosow, 1976). However, Larson (1990) and Vander Voort (1999) asserted that it is the quality rather than the quantity of one's social involvement which is more important. And so, although the elderly may spend less time interacting with others, their relationships may be more fulfilling and nurturing. Those changing circumstances, life events and opportunities which the elderly face, undoubtedly affect the manner in which people experience, evaluate, and cope with life's demands. Ernst and Cacioppo (1999) asserted that there is an overall positive correlation between loneliness and old age.

Adjustment can be improved and loneliness can diminish through involvement in interaction and activity- productive (voluntary or paid social work-teaching, accounting, supervisor) or unproductive work (Playing indoor game with co mates) or doing any creative work or passion i.e listening music, playing musical instruments, painting, drama. The ACTIVITY THEORY of aging states that aging in activities help the elderly in overcoming loneliness, depression, improving their mental health and augments self-esteem and thus they become forgiver which will help them to make better perception regarding their quality of life. It is based on the premise that the social and psychological health of a person is

escalated by continued activity in a variety of roles. Havighurst who propounded this theory contends that there is a positive correlation between activity, mental and social adjustment. He holds that the role crisis created by social isolation and lack of a social network is overcome by absorbing new roles. He calls this role flexibility. He defines it as "The capacity of personal quality to change roles easily and increase or reduce activity". In other words, people cannot be happy unless they stay socially active. Therefore present author recommends the introduction of the planned activities for the above mentioned factors in household and Old Age institution to manage the problems of adjustment and loneliness of the elderly people.

Scope of the Study

A study on adjustment and loneliness in old age has an immense scope because it provides an opportunity to understand the needs and problems of the aged people in the light of drastic demographic and socio-cultural changes in India. Since the study has made an attempt to perceive the adjustment pattern of the elderly in the context of changing living arrangement and in family structure and aging of population, it could certainly provide information regarding the differences in adjustment of the elderly living in varied home-living arrangements and make a comparative assessment on the basis of different living arrangements and gender wise difference. Hence it provides a better understanding of the phenomenon of aging and the process of adjustment and loneliness. Thus the present database facts can be used as a supportive document to plan the intervention program and guide & service for management of the problems of the elderly population.

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